

Community enhancement grants awarded

WCVEDG gives out \$171,727 to local organizations

By David Sykes

Over \$171 thousand in community enhancement grants were recently given out by the Willow Creek Valley Economic Development Group (WCVEDG) board of directors. The money came as part of this year's disbursement from the Columbia River Enterprise Zone. Following is a summary of the projects and amounts funded:

1. **\$50,000** to Heppner Community Foundation for a new business incubator center. The foundation is purchasing the Heppner Gazette-Times building for renovation as a place "to assist startups and small businesses to grow and be successful" the application said. The new facility will also include a commercial kitchen for public use. The Gazette-Times business is not being sold only the building, as the newspaper does not need as large a structure and is in the process of purchasing a smaller office to move into. Total project cost is \$1,220,000.
2. **\$6,000** to Neighborhood Center of South Morrow Count. This grant will be used to purchase food to disburse in emergencies to local families in need. Total project cost is \$12,000.

3. **\$50,000** to Heppner High School for construction of an indoor pitching and batting practice building. The 40 X 80 ft heated facility will include turf, netting and equipment. The facility will be used by Heppner High and Junior High baseball programs in which Ione students also participate. There are currently 16 boys participating in the baseball program, the application said. Total cost of the facility \$309,000.

4. **\$4,949** to Heppner City and Rural Fire Department for the purchase of a generator and a high-powered saw. The saw will be used for extraction at vehicle accidents. The generator will be placed at the firehall and used to open bay doors and provide lighting during power outages. Total cost of the equipment \$9,899.

5. **\$2,936** to Heppner Day Care to "replace and improve creative and dramatic play furnishings and accessories," for the children. Total cost of the purchases \$5,872.

6. **\$4,492** to the Oregon Trail Pro Rodeo Boosters to install either a concrete slab or a portable dance floor in the Spur 'Em Barn at the rodeo grounds. The group

has had to rent flooring in the past and this will allow them to host dances during rodeo with crowds between 600-700 people. Total cost of the project \$12,500.

Conditional Grants
In addition, WCVEDG awarded more grants if certain conditions were met by the applicants. They include:

1. **\$10,000** to the town of Lexington for landscaping improvement at town hall to improve the lawn, add fencing, picnic tables and possible access to a restroom. The grant was approved on condition the town provide a budget and a 50 percent match on the project. Total cost \$20,000.

2. **\$10,000** to the local FARM Foundation of the Morrow County Museum. The money will be used to repair the mural on the side of the large building in Heppner. Grant is awarded contingent on the Foundation providing more information, a budget and a 50 percent match to WCVEDG. Total cost of the project \$20,000.

3. **\$18,500** to the Willow Creek Country Club golf course. The money would be used for a new concrete floor in the shop

and to bring in equipment to hydro-seed the greens. According to the application the equipment "aerates the greens, plants new seeds and waters all at once." Also, to purchase a new or used mower to be used as a backup. Total cost of the project \$37,000.

4. **\$8,658** to the Morrow County Fair for purchasing new equipment used during fair and rodeo and throughout the year. Examples given were: New tarp, partitions, metal tables and inside tables. Total cost of purchases \$8,658 and the grant is contingent on receiving a budget and proof of 50 percent match.

5. **\$20,000** to Ione School to help fund a full renovation and remodel of the music room and stage, and offices for counselors, resource officer, CARE coordinator and public health nurse. According to the application the renovation would also include space for the food and hygiene pantry and stage renovations to provide meeting and workspaces. Total cost of the project is \$51,000. The grant was awarded contingent on enough funds being available.

WCVEDG also received an additional \$260,950 in community enhancement grant requests it was unable to fund at this time.

WCVEDG receives its money from the Columbia River Enterprise Zone (CREZ) which this year gave a total of \$736,273. The funds came from money collected by CREZ in lieu of property taxes from several large businesses situated in the enterprise zone near Boardman. Four Amazon data centers are the main contributors to the CREZ, which then distributes the funds out to multiple taxing districts and organizations throughout the county. Lamb Weston food processing plants and Tillamook Cheese in Boardman also pay into the enterprise zone as reduced taxes. The zone's purpose is to provide tax reduction to business who locate there and provide jobs and economic development to the county.

The CREZ II will disburse between \$15 and \$16 million per year throughout the county over the next 15 years, however there is no guarantee the money will continue to be distributed in

same manner, as the CREZ board has wide leeway how to spend the funds. Over the past 10 years, however, it has stuck to a plan of putting money into five categories including housing, community enhancement, public safety, education and infrastructure.

A new enterprise zone, CREZ III recently began operation and is currently negotiating with Amazon for five additional data centers. If a deal is struck and the centers are opened it would most likely mean even more large sums of money coming into the CREZ III coffers over the coming years. Amazon is already by far the largest property taxpayer in Morrow County, and any additional centers would enhance that designation.

The local WCVEDG has received substantial payouts from CREZ over the past years using the money for not only community enhancement but for a popular housing rehabilitation grant program, business enhancement grants and construction of brand-new housing including new duplex units in both Heppner and Ione.

High school football players honored at Shrine luncheon



Pictured (L-R): Kason Cimmiyotti, Conor Brosnan, Jace Coe, Brock Hisler and Taylor Rollins were honored at a luncheon Sunday. -Contributed photo.

Local football players who were chosen for the 2022 East-West Shrine game were honored by the Tri-County Shrine Club at a luncheon on Sunday, May 15 at the Masonic Lodge. The players chosen and honored were Kason Cimmiyotti, Conor Brosnan, Jace Coe, Brock Hisler and Taylor Rollins. Local members Herman Winter, Merlin

Hughes and Gene Orwick hosted the event for the players, coaches, parents, grandparents, families and friends.

Guests were given a tour of the 1916 Masonic Hall as Rod Thompson, Pendleton Shriner, shared history and explained that to become a Shriner, one must first be a member of the Masons. He also

shared information about the Shriner's hospitals and burn centers where children are treated for free all over the world.

Heppner's Brock Hisler was chosen as a player in the Shrine game to be held Saturday, August 6 at Baker City. Heppner players Cimmiyotti, Brosnan and Coe and Ione's Rollins were selected as alternates.

Scholarships awarded to local students

The South Morrow County Scholarship Board has announced the recipients of the 2021-2022 scholarships. The 20 recipients are graduating seniors from Ione Community School and Heppner High School and will receive \$1,000 each to help with tuition, supplies, books, rent or other expenses. The recipients are Julie Dyer, Kayla Rodriguez, Cecilia McElligott, Hailey Heide-man, Julianna Teeman, Conor Brosnan, ZaBrena Masterson, Grace Ogden, Hannah Finch, Haylie Peterson, Jace Coe, Faviola Juarez, Kylie Boor, Hailey Cunningham, Taylor Rollins, Blake Carter, Thomas Rudolf, Cody Fletcher, Aundrea Pirtle and Brock Hisler.

The board of directors include President Adam McCabe, Vice President Andrea Nelson, Treasurer Tricia Rollins, Secretary

Brandi Sweeney, Cydney McElligott and Carri Grieb. The South Morrow County Scholarship, Inc was established with the mission to grow funds to provide scholarships to graduating seniors from Heppner and Ione High Schools and to take the place of the Troedson Scholarship Fund which will discontinue in 2023. Tax deductible donations can be sent to SMCS Inc, PO Box 102, Ione, OR 97843.

The Coach Del LaRue Scholarship was developed in memory of Del LaRue, a long-time teacher and coach at Ione High School. Del had a passion for coaching basketball and track and field and loved seeing students set and achieve their goals. After retiring from teaching, Del continued to coach track for twelve additional years, during this time he helped many student athletes achieve

their goals and was honored as national Track and Field Coach of the Year.

Thomas Rudolf is the recipient of this year's award. After graduation, he plans to major in communications at Oregon Institute of Technology and being a student manager for the men's basketball team. Thomas has participated in track and field, cross country, basketball, baseball, FFA and FBLA. He has volunteered at school and in the community including community clean-ups, chain gang, clock operator and line judge for football games, trunk or treat and helped at the Cascade Lakes Relay Event.

This fund awards one \$1,000 scholarship to a college-bound Ione High School Senior based on demonstrated academic achievement, community involvement and with preference given to students who have participated in the Ione High School Track and Field Program. Students must be continuing their education at a community college, trade school, or four-year college or university. Applicants must have a minimum 3.0 accumulated GPA and shown involvement in community activities. The South Morrow County Scholarship Inc Board of Directors awards the scholarship on behalf of the family.

Town & Country 2022

An Evening With the Stars

The Town & Country Event will be May 19th 2022 at the Gilliam & Bisbee building. Dinner by Chef Alvin Liu. No host bar by Bucknum's Bar & Grill. Door prize donated by the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation. Tickets are limited! \$35 per person. Available at the Chamber Office, City Hall, Murray's Rx and Bank of Eastern Oregon

- Man of the Year
- Woman of the Year
- Educator of the Year
- Student of the Year
- Business of the Year



Rep. Greg Smith
District 57



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CONGRATULATIONS, HEPPNER & IONE 2022 GRADUATES!

Time is running out!

Join us in honoring and congratulating this year's Graduating classes from Heppner and Ione. We will be publishing photos of the seniors in the May 25th issue of the Heppner Gazette-Times. The deadline to be included is Monday, May 23rd at 5:00 pm. The cost is \$10 to have your name, business or family included.

Email - graphics@rapidsolve.net
Call - 541-676-9228
Text - 541-914-2157

Please include your name, family or business as you would like it to appear on the senior pages.