



the HEPPNER GAZETTE TIMES

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VOL. 143 NO. 31 10 Pages Wednesday, August 2, 2023 Morrow County, Heppner, Oregon

Life at the top: Local man recounts his time as a mountaineer



Edmundson descending the south side of Mt. Hood with Crater Rock in the background during a climb he made with his son, Jeff, and Greg Sweeney. -Contributed photo

By Andrea Di Salvo

“The mountains don’t care if you live or die.”

For Heppner man John Edmundson, that line has formed a mantra for much of his life, a life spent among the crags and cliffs of the mountains of the Pacific Northwest.

“The Oregon and Washington Cascades have been my playground,” says Edmundson, 87.

Edmundson’s life-long love for mountaineering developed early in life. His family moved from Newburg, OR to Hood River, OR in June of 1944.

“From the front yard of our home in Hood River, we could see Mt. Hood to the south and Mt. Adams to the

north,” Edmundson recalls.

Edmundson’s father had done a little mountain climbing as a Boy Scout in Salem, so it was pretty natural for him to connect with the local mountain-climbing and search and rescue (SAR) group, the Hood River Crag Rats.

The Crag Rats are America’s oldest Search and Rescue organization, formed in 1926. The members still wear their sig-

on July 4, 1946. The Crag Rats were having a family outing at the Spirit Lake campground on the north side of Mt. St. Helens. He was 10 years old.

“I realized later that it was special because the Crag Rat members had just returned home from fighting in World War II,” Edmundson says. “They were reconnecting with what they had previously enjoyed doing before the

bers the sense of pride he had as he returned to the parking lot at the timberline with his ice axe and pack.

“The people coming up the access trail looked at me and asked, ‘Did you climb the mountain?’ I thrust out my small chest and proudly exclaimed, ‘Yes!’” he recalls.

In the following years Edmundson would climb the north side of Mt. St. Helens five more times, as



A later climb of St. Helens with his good friend, girlfriend and eventual wife, Pat, along with his sister and friends from Hood River. They were joined by three brothers from the Valley, whose father took the photograph with Mt. Adams in the background. “It was a routine but very enjoyable climb up the Lizard Route,” says Edmundson. “Pat likes to say she did mountain climbing until she caught me.” -Contributed photo

nature black and white checkered shirts, adopted in the 1920s, and remain active at their primary focus of search and rescue on Mt. Hood and in the Columbia Gorge.

Edmundson’s first climb was on Mt. St. Helens

war.”

Edmundson remembers being impressed by the fact that, even though it was summer, there were some snowflakes falling from the light cloud cover over the mountain as they reached the peak. He also remem-

well as one climb up the south side after its eruption in 1980. He can still picture the scene from the top of that last climb.

“I peered over the edge to the 1,500-foot drop-off to the crater, with its lava

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4-H members compete in pre-fair competitions



4-H junior Tenley Rosenbalm prepares for the Quick and Easy Ground Beef contest last week in Heppner. -Contributed photo

Morrow County 4-H members participated in the county pre-fair contests on Wednesday, July 28.

The pre-fair consists of two cooking contests for the junior level members, fourth through sixth grade, and presentations by all member ages and levels.

The cooking contests featured at pre-fair are the measuring contest, in which first-year members are given a list of different ingredients to measure using correct techniques specific to the ingredient, and Quick and Easy Ground Beef, sponsored by the Morrow County Livestock Growers. Members in the ground beef contest have one hour to prepare, cook, serve and clean up a meal featuring one pound of ground beef.

4-H members participating in the presentations contests presented different types of speeches, including the 4-H Pledge, demonstrations, illustrated talks and impromptu speaking.

At the intermediate level, Elizabeth Wallgren claimed the champion rib-

bon in both impromptu speaking and the Celebrate Our World presentation. Ellie Sak swept the rest of the champion spots in the 4-H Pledge, individual demonstration, FCS consumer decision-making, FCS Skill-a-thon and illustrated talk.

Audrey Sak took reserve champion in the 4-H pledge and illustrated talk, while Klynn McNamee took the reserve champion in FCS consumer decision making and the FCS Skill-a-thon.

For the juniors, Clay Sak took the champion ribbon in junior measuring. Hadlie Duncan was champion in impromptu speaking and reserve champion in junior measuring.

Mikalie Duncan was champion in the 4-H pledge, illustrated talk and quick and easy ground beef, as well as reserve champion in impromptu speaking.

Kinsley Hancock was reserve champion in the 4-H pledge and illustrated talk, while Harper Krebs was reserve champion in

Quick and Easy Ground Beef.

Other contestant placings were:

Senior—Arianna Worden, FCS Skill-a-thon, blue.

Intermediate—Audrey Sak, FCS consumer decision making, blue, and FCS Skill-a-thon, blue; Elizabeth Wallgren: 4-H Pledge, blue, individual demonstration, blue, and illustrated talk, blue; and Eva Worden: FCS Skill-a-thon, blue.

Junior—Alexander Wallgren, 4-H Pledge, blue, illustrated talk, blue, impromptu speaking, blue, Quick and Easy Ground Beef, blue; Allison Crum, Quick and Easy Ground Beef, blue; Callahan Baker, 4-H Pledge, blue, and illustrated talk, blue; Clay Sak, 4-H pledge, blue, FCS consumer decision making, blue, FCS Skill-a-thon, blue, and Quick and Easy Ground Beef, blue; Hadlie Duncan, 4-H pledge, blue; Jade Piel, junior measuring, blue, and Quick and Easy Ground Beef, blue; Jayden Macias, illustrated talk, blue, and Quick and Easy



Callahan Baker gives a presentation during the 4-H pre-fair contests. Callahan is a junior in 4-H. -Contributed photo

Ground Beef, blue; Kamryn Dickenson, 4-H Pledge, blue, and Quick and Easy Ground Beef, blue; Kinsley Hancock, Quick and Easy Ground Beef, blue; Kord Dickenson, Quick and Easy Ground Beef, blue; Madelyn Campbell, 4-H Pledge, blue; Mataya Philpott, 4-H Pledge, blue; Tenley Rosenbalm, Quick and Easy Ground Beef, blue, Wyatt Piel, junior measuring, blue, and Quick and Easy Ground Beef, blue.

Circuit court placement still top of mind for many residents

By Andrea Di Salvo

Even with a packed agenda at its July 19 meeting in Irrigon, the Morrow County Board of Commissioners still found that the site for the new Morrow County Circuit Court building was at the forefront of many residents’ thoughts. Concerns range from land value to child safety to the future of the fair and rodeo.

Tim Collins of Heppner owns land that adjoins the newly-selected site. He told the commissioners he

appreciated the work that had gone into keeping the courthouse in Heppner, but still had questions. A few of the questions he presented to the board included the possibility of a privacy barrier, preservation of existing landscaping and trees, property access from the east, ability to keep horses on properties, possible devaluation of nearby land, and whether the county would update water lines in the Adams addition.

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Two men injured in Irrigon-area shooting

Two men are out of the hospital after being injured in a possible drive-by shooting in the Irrigon area last Wednesday.

Morrow County Sheriff’s Office Communications Center got the 911 call reporting a possible

drive-by shooting in the Depot Lane area just outside of Irrigon just after 8 p.m. July 26.

One patient was airlifted to a Tri-Cities hospital. The other was transported to Good Shepherd Medical

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County commission hears update on mental health topics

By Andrea Di Salvo

The Board of Commissioners heard an update regarding Community Counseling Solutions’ (CCS) work in the region, especially opioid settlement funds and the need for acute care, at its July 19 board meeting in Irrigon.

During her quarterly report, CCS Executive director Kimberly Lindsay addressed the board concerning the Janssen opioid settlement funds that were announced earlier this year. Janssen, a subsidiary of Johnson & Johnson, was one of several companies involved in national settlements for their role in

manufacturing and distributing opioids. Of the \$5 billion national settlement from Janssen, Oregon will receive \$62 million over 10 years.

Last year, the Oregon legislature created an Opioid Settlement Prevention, Treatment and Recovery Board (PTR Board), administered by the Oregon Health Authority. The PTR Board administers the state’s 45 percent share of funds. The additional 55 percent from each settlement goes to Oregon cities and counties and must be used exclusively to address substance use disorders.

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Bill to fund work on nitrate contamination passes out of Senate committee

A bill promising funding for Morrow County wells has passed out of the U.S. Senate Interior Appropriations Subcommittee, U.S. Senator Jeff Merkley announced last week. The bill, if passed, would include \$1.32 million for Morrow County for the second phase of its work to address nitrate contamination of private wells.

Funding would be used to develop a preliminary engineering report and for vetting alternatives for providing well users with clean

water.

“Morrow County thanks Sen. Jeff Merkley for his efforts in securing this funding. With his and Sen. Ron Wyden’s help we will continue our partnership in first identifying, then implementing long-term solutions to providing safe and clean drinking water for all our citizens,” said Morrow County Commission Chair David Sykes.

Merkley, as Chair of the Senate Interior Appropriations Subcommittee,

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