



Veterans luncheon held at new Heppner Innovation Hub

Twenty-five attend inaugural event



Twenty-five veterans attended the first veterans’ luncheon at the Heppner Innovation Hub last week. -Contributed photo

On Wednesday, Dec. 11, veterans gathered at the new Heppner Innovation Hub for a special luncheon organized to honor their service and provide resources for their needs. Guests were treated to a delicious meal of freshly-made hoagies prepared by Jodi Segraves. Morrow County Commission Chair David Sykes spoke and offered a welcoming message of care to his fellow veterans. The gathering also featured Amanda Kendricks, the Morrow County Veterans Service Officer, who was available to answer veterans’ questions and offer guidance on various benefits and services. The luncheon was made possible thanks to grants from the Wildhorse Foundation and ChangeX, which

helped fund the event. “This event has been a long time coming,” said Jerry Conklin, who has been working tirelessly for the past year to establish a regular veterans’ luncheon. “Our goal is to create a space where veterans can connect with each other and access important resources.” The event’s location, the new Heppner Innovation Hub, provided a welcoming and accessible venue for the gathering. Organizers hope to make the luncheon a recurring event to further serve the local veteran community by providing information and resources. The next luncheon is set for Jan. 8 at 12 p.m. in the St. Patrick’s Senior Center dining room. No reservation is required, and the luncheon is free. For more information

contact Jerry Conklin at South Morrow County Seniors Matter or Amanda Kendricks through the Morrow County Veterans Services Office.



Dennis Waite checks the information available from Amanda Kendricks at the veterans’ luncheon. -Contributed photo

Santa’s breakfast visit to Holly Rebekah Lodge



By Chris Sykes

On Saturday, Dec. 14, Santa Claus made a detour from his North Pole preparations to spend two jolly hours at the Holly Rebekah Lodge in Lexington. From 9 a.m. to 11 a.m., Santa swapped toy-making and reindeer wrangling for pancakes and Christmas cheer, delighting kids and adults alike. The breakfast, fit for even Santa’s appetite, featured pancakes, scrambled

eggs, sausages and cinnamon rolls. While the kids enjoyed the meal, Santa himself seemed particularly enthusiastic about the cinnamon rolls—some say they saw him sneak an extra one or two for the road. The highlight of the event, of course, was the chance for kids to tell Santa their Christmas wishes in person. Children eagerly lined up, each taking their turn to share their hopes for gifts ranging from dolls to

the latest gadgets. Santa, with his hearty laugh and knowing nods, made every child feel special. Parents and grandparents joined in the fun, enjoying breakfast while watching the excitement unfold. Some even tried to sneak in a few wish-list hints of their own, though Santa’s focus remained firmly on the kids. To keep the holiday spirit alive, Santa handed out candy canes. The room was filled with laughter and chatter, creating a festive atmosphere that made everyone feel a little more connected to the season. By the time Santa departed at 11 a.m., the lodge was filled with satisfied smiles, sticky fingers and full hearts. As he headed back to his sleigh, Santa left behind a community warmed by holiday cheer and ready for Christmas.

Early G-T deadline for Christmas, New Year

This year, Christmas and New Year’s Day both fall on a Wednesday. Since Wednesday is our normal publication day, the Heppner Gazette-Times will alter its schedule and publish on Tuesday, Dec. 24, and

Tuesday, Dec. 31. If you’d like to submit an advertisement or story for either issue, please ensure it is sent in by 5 p.m. on Friday, Dec. 20, or Friday, December 27.

Heppner council hears update from WCVEDG

By Andrea Di Salvo Willow Creek Valley Economic Development Group has been quietly busy this year, keeping momentum in projects from housing to childcare. That was the update Kim Coil gave the Heppner City Council at its Dec. 9 meeting. Coil told the Heppner councilors that Willow Creek Valley Economic Development Group (WCVEDG) takes seriously the stewardship of the money it receives. “We believe that these funds have a large impact on our community,” said Coil. For example, Columbia River Enterprise Zone (CREZ) II awarded WCVEDG \$579,357 this year, \$575,00 of which the group has invested directly into South Morrow County—

specifically, the Heppner area. “We are using the money. We’re not sitting on it,” said Coil. “Hopefully we’re making a difference to a lot of people.” Coil said WCVEDG has several priorities, including housing, business enhancement, senior services, childcare services and community enhancement. In response to the chronic housing shortage in South Morrow, Coil said, the group is trying to improve housing accessibility and availability. One way they accomplish that is through housing rehabilitation grants, which are open year-round. Last year they invested \$113,000 for improvements

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Hoop Shoot winners advance to districts



Heppner Elks Hoop Shoot winners (L-R) Scout Matheny, Weston Christy, Emma Mullins, Sonny Matheny, Mikalie Duncan and Charlie Mullins. -Contributed photo

Heppner Elks Lodge hosted its annual Hoop Shoot free-throw contest on Dec. 15. Thirty contestants ages eight to 13 competed within their age groups. Participants shot 10 free throws, then another 15 free throws, for a total of 25. Six local kids earned the chance to participate in the Elks East District Hoop Shoot contest on Jan. 12 in John Day. The East District consists of Condon, Heppner, Milton-Freewater, Enterprise, Baker, John Day, Burns, Bend, Madras, Prineville and Ontario lodges, and each lodge has an opportunity to send one participant from each of the six age groups. Winners from that competition advance to the state contest in Silverton in February.

Heppner winners were Scout Matheny for the 8-9 girls, Weston Christy for the 8-9 boys, Emma Mullins for the 10-11 girls, Sonny Matheny for the 10-11 boys, Mikalie Duncan for the 12-13 girls and Charlie Mullins for the 12-13 boys. Other participants were Dylan Turner, Zeb Wedding, Ladd Haak, Jaxon Wilson, Grady Mullins, Benham Hagewood, Berkeley Hanna, Ella Mullins, Whitlie Duncan, Lillian Kenny, Cohen Botefuhr, Urijah Wedding, Preston Milligan, Mack Sweeney, Walker Haak, Lucas Matheny, Kamryn Dickenson, Hadlie Duncan, Kason Botefuhr, Jasper Hanna, Keller Sweeney, Joel Wilson, Payton Matheny and Gage Rosenbalm.

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