

# EOTEC and Windy River Elementary awarded \$25,000 corporate grants

By **JADE McDOWELL**  
Staff Writer

The Eastern Oregon Trade and Event Center and Windy River Elementary each received a \$25,000 grant from RDO Equipment and R.D. Offutt Company.

The grants are part of the companies' Community Builder program, which is designed to be "transformative and impactful" on the communities the companies work with, according to a news release.

"Our Community Builder program builds upon our value of community involvement at RDO while mirroring the passion of giving back, which is the legacy of my father and our founder, Ron Offutt, along with the other members of our family," Christi Offutt, Chair of RDO Equipment Co. and R.D. Offutt Company, said in the release.

The grants are awarded based on nominations from company employees. Greg Harris, Farm Man-

ager for Threemile Canyon Farms, an R.D. Offutt Company in Boardman, submitted the application for EOTEC.

One of the EOTEC project's primary functions will be to serve as home to the Farm-City Pro Rodeo and Umatilla County Fair, of which RDO Equipment and Threemile Canyon Farms are sponsors.

"As a parent of children who will be exhibiting livestock at the fair, I have made a personal commit-

ment to this project," Harris said. "It's a much-needed facility for the youth and residents of Umatilla County, and I intend to be involved with the project until it's completed in 2017."

Hermiston Mayor David Drotzmann, who serves on the EOTEC fundraising committee along with Harris, said RDO Equipment "continues to set the example for corporate partnership in our region" with the \$25,000 grant, which will

be used for construction.

Rose Corral, HR/CSR Director for Threemile Canyon Farms, submitted the application for Windy River Elementary School in Boardman. She said the money will be used to build a play structure at the school, which will be open to the community and creates a place for local youth to "participate in wholesome activities and interact with each other in a positive, safe environment."

Principal Brandon

Hammon said in a statement that the play structure was designed with student involvement.

"Through this grant we were able to go above and beyond our hopes and expectations and create a top rate playground," he said.

Along with the EOTEC and Windy River, the Offutt Family Foundation awarded one other Community Builder grant to the Great Plains Food Bank Backpack Program in West Fargo, ND.



STAFF PHOTO BY ALEXA LOUGEE

Steve Watkins, owner of the Columbia Court Club (front left in green shirt) watches as crews work to extinguish the fire.

## FIRE:

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ment received a call of black smoke filling the Columbia Court Club building at 11:24 a.m. Monday.

Firefighters from around the region responded to the scene and located a fire on the first floor near the women's locker room. The fire proceeded to spread upwards to the second floor. Crews contained the fire within a half hour of the initial 9-1-1 call, but black smoke could still be seen coming from windows, doors and vents throughout the busy lunch hour.

Steve Watkins, owner of Columbia Court Club since he established it in 1978, was repairing a drinking fountain toward the back of the building when the lights flickered and then turned off. Knowing there were people using the facilities, Watkins used the light of his cell phone to look for club members and help them evacuate.

Mary Marsing, the office manager at the club, was sitting in her downstairs office when she heard popping noises coming from the upper floor. She heard a bang and smoke began rolling through the building. Marsing placed the call to 9-1-1. She has worked at Columbia Court Club for 26 years.

Watkins said he had "no clue" as to a numer-



STAFF PHOTO BY ALEXA LOUGEE

**Black smoke billows out of several windows, vents and doors at the Columbia Court Club Monday.**

ical value of the damage done. He is waiting on the insurance to conclude its investigation, though he said the damage to the front walls, roof and beams seemed extensive and the inside surfaces of

most of the building were covered in a thick layer of black soot.

Fire Marshal Bohm guessed the damage to be at least \$150,000.

There is not yet a timeline for when the club will reopen. Zumba classes are being held this week in McKenzie Park. Watkins is hopeful the city will continue to rent out the park and allow the club to run at least one class a day, but those plans had not been finalized. In the meantime, member dues for the roughly 1,100 Court Club members have been frozen. Nobody will be charged while the facilities are out of commission. There were no reports

of injuries to anyone who was at the Court Club when the fire broke out. One firefighter working on scene did experience a heat-related illness.

Crews from the Hermiston Fire Department as well as Echo, Irrigon, Stanfield and Boardman were involved in the fire-fighting efforts. Umatilla Electric Cooperative was brought in to shutdown electric power to the building.

## FAIR:

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talked into it, but didn't know how it would go over."

Since then, the reaction to Creedence Clearwater Revisited's concerts has been astounding, and driven in part by a generation of kids who, as Cosmo said, "weren't even born when the music came out." Likewise, the release of a double-live CD was the result of public demand. Sales of "Recollection" hit platinum status in 2008.

Joining Cook and Cosmo are lead singer/rhythm guitar player John Tristao, lead guitarist Kurt Griffey and multi-instrumentalist Steve Gunner.

A Thousand Horses describes their music as a fusion of classic sounds - Lynyrd Skynyrd, the Allman Brothers, Black Crowes and Exile on Main Street-era Rolling Stones, wrapped up in a modern-country context. Their debut EP included "Travelin' Man" and "Suicide Eyes," which was featured in the 2011 remake of the 1980s film classic "Footloose."

Requiring minimal introduction, The Bellamy Brothers have crafted

heartfelt country songs, connecting them with millions of listeners around the world for more than 30 years. Howard and David Bellamy have cranked out such hits as "Let Your Love Flow," "Sugar Daddy" and "Redneck Girl."

The Bellamy Brothers' success and longevity in the country and pop genres is a feat that few acts have duplicated. And they're still going strong. Years before they climbed the country charts with songs like "Stay a Little Longer" and "Rum," the Brothers Osborne entertained blue-collar workers during all-night jam sessions in a small fishing town on the Atlantic seaboard. T.J. and John Osborne played everything from traditional country music to rock and roll. Earlier this year, they released their major-label debut, "Pawn Shop," which features a little bit of every-

The Latino night event offers people a chance to kick up their heels and dance. The headliner is Montez De Durango. Also taking the stage are Tormenta De Durango and Domador De La Sierra.

For more information or to purchase reserved tickets, call 541-567-6121 or stop by the fair office at 515 W. Orchard Ave., Hermiston.



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