

Our Community

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Developing a new plan

Health challenges inspire local woman to pursue

Library exhibit features Ozark Hippie's watercolors

By TAMMY MALGESINI
COMMUNITY EDITOR

When the symptoms of rheumatoid arthritis and lupus got progressively worse, Kim La Plant went with Plan B.

This past fall, the Hermiston woman, whose art moniker is Ozark Hippie, was sitting outside trying to decide what to do. As her physical pain increased, La Plant knew it was time to make some changes.

"Plan A was working. Plan B was the art," she explained. "I said, 'I guess I'm going to go with Plan B.'"

While pondering what path to take, La Plant looked down and saw what she described as a "really cool leaf." She had some Dollar Tree watercolors leftover from a project with kids at church and decided to pick up a brush and paint the leaf.

Her husband, Brian, was immediately taken aback at how realistic the painting was. With his encouragement, La Plant dove into her artwork.

"There are times I dream a painting and if I don't get up and paint it, I can't sleep," she said.

Naturally creative, La Plant has never taken formal art classes. She previously worked mostly with charcoal, acrylics, carving and woodworking, as well as re-purposing all kinds of objects. Watercolors, she said, are easier to work with and she instantly fell in love with the medium.



La Plant, aka Ozark Hippie

"I've always been crafty," she said. "I can literally take something out of someone's garbage and make something out of it."

Growing up in Arkansas in a house without running water or electricity, La Plant knows how to live simply and make the most of resources available. Initially, she continued to use inexpensive art supplies — making due with what was available.

After selling a commissioned piece, she purchased higher quality paper. In addition, a friend she had helped with some interior design work gave La Plant some higher quality paints and brushes.

"I was using the best I could get, but it was a huge difference," she said.

La Plant is still trying to figure out her direction with her artwork. Shortly after getting into watercolors, Badder Israel, a tattoo artist from New York City who was opening a shop in Kennewick, asked La Plant to display some of her pieces in his shop's art gallery. Instead of attending the opening show, she merely dropped off a number of paintings and left.

Content to spend time in her studio — an old 1993 Bluebird school bus from



CONTRIBUTED BY OZARK HIPPIE

"The Bond of Hope," a watercolor by Ozark Hippie — aka Kim La Plant. The Hermiston woman is the featured artist for the month July at the Hermiston Public Library.

the Stanfield School District — gardening or hanging out with her animals and husband, La Plant hasn't developed a marketing plan. After repeated requests from Sheri Konningrud, La Plant finally relented and drove Plan B (the bus's moniker) to Purple Ridge Lavender Festival. The La Plants hung out in the vendor area and sold some of her work to festival-goers.

When recently contacted by the Hermiston Public Library about displaying her work for the July exhibit, La Plant immediately said yes.

"I've had other people ask me to have my art places and I hesitate," she said. "But I'm a book person. I love the library."

It should come as no surprise that La Plant's first inspiration to create art came after reading. With no supplies at her disposal, the 9-year-old borrowed some

colored pencils from school and used an old piece of wood as a canvas. She drew a scene with a cottage after reading "The Hobbit."

"I kind of drew what I thought it looked like," she said.

The Hermiston Public Library is located at 235 E. Gladys Ave. It's open Monday through Thursdays from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. and Friday/Saturdays from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. La Plant's work will remain on display throughout the month. An artist's reception will be announced.

For more information about the library exhibit, call 541-567-2882. To learn more about La Plant and her work, search Facebook for "Ozark Hippie."

La Plant previously worked as the office coordinator at the Hermiston Herald.



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED BY LUKE BARNES

Members of Jill's Silly Walkers, including Jillian Smalley, Kristi Smalley and Mark Smalley, hold a banner while participating in the seventh annual Northwest Run/Walk for Epilepsy in Hermiston.

Epilepsy Walk takes steps against disease

HERMISTON HERALD

More than 75 people enjoyed a leisurely 1-mile stroll beginning at McKenzie Park during the Northwest Run/Walk for Epilepsy in Hermiston.

In its seventh year, the June 17 event aims to raise money, awareness and support for people who live with epilepsy/seizure disorders.

After completing the walk, the participants gathered in front of The Arc Building for a short presentation. The Arc president Michele Keitzke shared information about the services offered by the Northwest Epilepsy Foundation, including providing medications for homeless people with seizure disorders. Next on the program was a testimonial by Yaya Martinez, mother of 22-month-old, Alexia, who was diagnosed with a seizure disorder shortly after birth.

Martinez shared that her daughter is her "Epi-

lepsy Hero" for continuing to grow and thrive despite the challenges of living with this complex disorder that impacts one in 26 people. The crowd, including many family and friends sporting bright pink "Team Alexia" T-shirts, cheered when Martinez declared that, due to medications, Alexia had been seizure-free for one year.

The event raised more than \$7,000, which is split between the Epilepsy Foundation and The Arc Umatilla County. Prior to the walk, coffee was provided by Dutch Bros. Coffee along with fruit provided by Fiesta Foods. Many local businesses provided a variety of items resulting in door prizes for all participants.

"It is truly amazing how this community embraces this event every year," said Keitzke.

For more information about epilepsy, visit www.epilepsynw.org.

IN BRIEF

Summer reading builds fun

The summer reading program is continuing at the Echo Public Library.

The activities take place Fridays at 2 p.m. With a theme of "Build A Better World," activities are Fridays at 2 p.m. The topics for upcoming programs are: Build Cork "Log" Cabins (July 14), Fairies: Make fairy houses (July 21) and Manners (July 28). Also, participants should turn in their reading logs during the July 28 program.

The closing celebration is Aug. 4 at 2 p.m. with a party, awards and a presentation by Christopher Leebrick, an award-winning Oregon storyteller. It will be held in the city hall auditorium.

For more information, call 541-376-8411.

Expo event connects military veterans

Live entertainment, military displays, a food tent, a kids' area and informational booths are featured at the Veteran Benefit Expo.

Organized by the Oregon Department of Veterans' Affairs, more than 75 booths will provide information about services available to veterans and their families. The event, which rotates venues each year, also features a career fair. The expo is Saturday, July 15 from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. at the Deschutes Fair & Expo Center in Redmond. There is no admission charge.

The entertainment line-

up includes the acoustic/folk sounds of DD214s, the rockin' of Got Your Six and multi-faceted entertainer/comedian Juan Canopii.

For more information, contact Tyler Francke at 503-373-2389, tyler.francke@state.or.us or visit www.expo.oregonva.com.

Sensory shows offer special movie viewing

A special screening of "Despicable Me 3" provides a comfortable atmosphere with the lights up a little, the volume down and the flexibility for audience members to move around.

The Arc of Umatilla County in conjunction with Hermiston Stadium brick, an award-winning Oregon storyteller. It will be held in the city hall auditorium.

The special show time is Saturday, July 15 with the doors opening at 10 a.m. at 355 W. Theater Lane, off Highway 395 in Hermiston. The movie starts at 10:30 a.m. and costs \$5 per person.

The Arc advocates for the rights of children and adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities. For more information about programs, services and activities, call 541-567-7615 or visit www.facebook.com/arcofumatillacounty.

Astronomer to shed light on eclipses

An upcoming astronomy talk will provide insight about the Aug. 21 total solar eclipse.

Shane L. Larson, a research associate professor at CIERA — the Center for Interdisciplinary Exploration and Research in Astrophysics at the Adler Planetarium in Chicago — has presented yearly lectures in Pendleton. During his talk, the former La Grande man will explore some of the important ways that eclipses have helped in developing a better understanding of the Earth and its place in the Cosmos.

"We'll review the basics of total solar eclipses, and talk about what to expect and how to safely enjoy the eclipse with your friends and family," Larson said.

Stand in the Shadow of the Moon is Sunday, July 16 from 6-8 p.m. at The Prodigal Son Brewery & Pub, 230 S.E. Court Ave., Pendleton. There is no admission charge. People who would like to dine at the pub are asked to do so before or after the presentation, as food will not be served in the theater.

For more information, contact Matthew Barnes at mhbvalcar@gmail.com or 541-276-6090. For more about Larson, visit www.writescience.wordpress.com.

Living Faith plans kids' pep rally

Children ages 3-12 are invited to participate in a faith-based kids' festival.

Victory! The Ultimate Pep Rally kicks off Sunday, July 16 from 6-8:30 p.m. at Living Faith Church, 1611 Diagonal Blvd., Hermiston. The free event continues nightly through Thursday,

July 20. Transportation can be arranged.

Parents are encouraged to register their kids at www.winacity.com or by calling 541-720-7808.

Cunnington belts out tunes in park series

Known for her sultry vocal tone, Melissa Cunnington is a professional vocalist who studied vocal music in college and has performed in several ensembles for years around the country.

Living and teaching in Milton-Freewater, Cunnington frequently performs in the area and is the featured performer for the Monday, July 17 Music in the Parks. The free concert starts at 7 p.m. at Irrigon Marina Park. People are encouraged to bring a blanket or lawn chair. In addition, food will be available for purchase.

Cunnington's musical interests and genres include jazz, blues, rhythm & blues and pop. Her ability to change from soft and sultry to full-on belting is something that audiences look forward to hearing.

Music in the Parks series alternates between Boardman and Irrigon marina parks each Monday through Aug. 14. For more information, call Tami Sherer at 541-571-0844. To hear Cunnington's voice, visit www.reverbnation.com/melissacunnington.

Strike out against domestic violence

The public is invited

to roll a strike during a bowling event to raise money for a local non-profit organization.

In its fifth year, the Domestic Violence Services Bowl-A-Thon is Saturday, July 22, from 6-8 p.m. at Desert Lanes, 1545 N. First St., Hermiston. The cost is \$30 per bowler or \$120 for a team of four. The fee includes three games and shoe rental. It's open to all ages, and prizes will

be given. In addition, raffle tickets are \$1 each or six for \$5 for some great prizes.

The annual fundraiser helps support the organization's efforts in giving victims of domestic, dating and sexual violence, and stalking the support and resources to become survivors.

For more information or to register, call 541-276-3322 or visit www.dvs-or.org.

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GOLF TOURNAMENT

GOLFING FOR A CAUSE

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Four person Scramble • Limited to first 120 golfers

8:00am: Check-in opens.
Teams & hole assignments announced.

9:00am: Shot gun start
Conclusion of tournament: Lunch, awards ceremony

Please contact Big River Golf Course to reserve a cart at 541-922-3006. (cars are not included in the entry fee)

For more information, contact Dave Hughes at 541-571-7293.