

DIGGING INTO DATA

Farm Fair seminars highlight latest research, trends

By **GEORGE PLAVERN**
STAFF WRITER

During its second year at the Eastern Oregon Trade and Event Center the Hermiston Farm Fair continued to add new lectures and seminars highlighting previously overlooked aspects of Columbia Basin agriculture.

Historically speaking, the Farm Fair has focused on the latest and greatest developments in potato production — the signature crop supported by Oregon State University's Hermiston Agricultural Research and Extension Center.

The 44th annual event, however, introduced a number of new presentations Thursday covering topics such as organic crops, precision irrigation and pollinators.

Phil Hamm, station director at HAREC, said he did not know the exact attendance, but estimated it was in the hundreds.

"What we're trying to do is (reach) as many of our stakeholders as possible in our region," Hamm said.

Last year's move to EOTEC from the Hermiston Conference Center certainly helped, Hamm said, providing a larger venue to bring in more presenters and hold more sessions. This year's trade show featured 48 different vendors, including multiple farm suppliers, Energy Trust of Oregon and the U.S. Department of Agriculture Farm Service Agency.

Attendees filled the room for a morning seminar on pollinators, which discussed the importance of bees and bee habitat in agricultural systems. Andony



STAFF PHOTO BY E.J. HARRIS

Ron Halbakken, factory sales manager for Legacy Steel Buildings, talks on his cell phone in front of his booth at the Hermiston Farm Fair on Thursday at EOTEC in Hermiston.

Melathopoulos, with OSU's Pollinator Health Extension Program, said Oregon is home to more species of bees than there are east of the Mississippi River.

"It's a hotbed of diversity," Melathopoulos said. "People are just amazed by them."

Melathopoulos went on to explain how farmers can treat their crops for weeds and pests while taking care not to harm pollinators. He ran through a litany of available products, demonstrating how to properly read labels and determine if and when a grower should apply certain chemicals in the field.

"Without a doubt, pollination is very important for the production of many crops," Melathopoulos said. "I hope peo-

ple came out of this session knowing pest control is possible and compatible with pollinators."

For the first time, the Hermiston Farm Fair also organized a seminar dedicated specifically to growing organic crops. It takes three years before a farm can be certified organic, and growers must adapt to a very strict set of approved standards.

Local organic production is on the rise, said Alexandra Stone, a former organic farmer and cropping system specialist for OSU. In eastern Washington, Stone said organic sales grew sixfold at the farm gate between 2005 and 2015, from \$100 million to \$600 million.

"There's already a lot of organic production out here," she said.

Yet demand for organics is still outpacing production in the U.S., with imports exceeding exports by \$1.1 billion, Stone said. With that in mind, she led a survey among 20 farmers in the room to determine what they want and need from the university to tap into the organic marketplace.

Of those polled, 79 percent said they expect demand for organics will continue to increase, yet 40 percent said they did not have the tools to control pests and disease. The vast majority of farmers said they would benefit from some kind of technical training through OSU, with more than half favoring a hybrid online undergraduate and professional development certificate program.

Later in the afternoon, Clinton Shock with the OSU Malheur Experiment Station detailed how precision irrigation can optimize yields and save farmers money, all while protecting the environment.

"We really want high and stable production of horticulture and crops," Shock said. "Precision irrigation is really the key."

Shock said researchers are working to determine a set of criteria known as the soil-water tension for different crops, which essentially describes the amount of energy a plant must expend to suck up water in the ground. If the tension is too high, a plant may shut down. If the tension is too low, water may leach away nutrients, leading to waste.

But if a grower knows the soil property, Shock said they can find the sweet spot. That means healthier crops for less money. Plus, as a side benefit, he said the more efficiently nitrogen is used, the more it protects groundwater quality.

"A lot of the public thinks growers are not innovative, or stuck in the mud," Shock said. "That just isn't so."

No settlement reached for Houfmuse

HERMISTON HERALD

No settlement was reached Monday during a conference between the Umatilla County District Attorney's Office and Tyree Houfmuse, who is charged with murder, manslaughter, felon in possession of a firearm and two counts of unlawful use of a weapon, in the May death of Hermiston resident James Cragun.

Chief deputy District Attorney Jaclyn Jenkins said the next step would likely be for the judge to set motion dates and trial dates, but no dates had yet been scheduled.

Cragun's parents and sister were at the courtroom Monday before it was closed for the private hearing. They talked about the toll the last few months has taken on their family.

"His kids are just going through hell," said Beverly Cragun, the victim's mother. His sister, Cynthia Bailey, said the family was hoping for a life imprisonment sentence.

She said the family was also hoping to find out exactly what happened that night, as they still don't know the exact series of events that led to Cragun's death.

Some of Houfmuse's relatives were also at the courthouse on Monday. Houfmuse's aunt declined to comment on the case.



Local agencies train for crash scenes

By **ANTONIO SIERRA**
STAFF WRITER

In the eastbound lane of Interstate 84 near the Pendleton Keystone RV plant, a semi-truck has slid into the median, its trailer flipped over and completely blocking the left lane.

Emergency responders want to clear the area of traffic, but some pressing questions remain. How should firefighters position their vehicles? Where should they place the safety cones? What were the best in-the-moment decisions to avoid it from becoming infinitely worse?

Luckily for the responders, it wasn't a real situation, but a simulation with toy cars and paper roads within the safe confines of the Pendleton Fire Station.

Guided by state officials and a towing professional, ODOT held a half-day training in Pendleton Friday on traffic impact management to a room full of area firefighters, paramedics, transportation workers and police officers.

The goal was to train this group of professionals in how to avoid second collisions, a situation where a traffic incident is made worse when another vehicle collides into the scene.

The instructors played video after video from across the country showing the pile-ups and secondary accidents that can spring



EO FILE PHOTO

A Pendleton Police officer directs traffic at the intersection of Highway 395 and Perkins Avenue on August 1, 2017, after a transmission interruption during a thunderstorm knocked out power to Pendleton residents.

from routine responses to situations like a dead animal in the road or a single-car accident off the shoulder.

Dangerous brushes with passing motorists are felt closer to home as well. Pendleton firefighter/paramedic Lorne Becker described the experience of responding to an emergency near Woodpecker Truck & Equipment on I-84.

"They get in the other lane, but they don't slow down," he said. "It's difficult when you're trying to take care of someone."

Darin Weaver, the incident management coordinator for ODOT, called the kind of motorists who tend to be behind second collisions "D drivers," the D standing for drunk, drugged, drowsy, distracted and "just plain

dangerous."

"I think we actually have more 'D drivers' on the road than safe, attentive, defensive drivers," he said.

Although police and firefighters are generally recognized for putting themselves in harm's way, Weaver said they're much more likely to die from a secondary collision than they are from a shooting or fire.

According to statistics provided by ODOT, five firefighters die each year and one police officer dies every month from secondary collisions.

Tow truck operators — often the last person at a highway scene — die at a rate equivalent to one per week.

Not helping the matter is an increasing number of fatal colli-

sions, which each require attention from law enforcement and other government agencies. According to ODOT, there were 410 fatal collisions in Oregon in 2015, a huge jump from 321 in 2014 and 292 in 2013.

One factor that could help reduce secondary collisions is making the public aware of a law already on the books. Cars that get into a collision but are still operable must leave the travel lanes.

Weaver said many drivers' failure to observe this law is less the fault of the general public and more a responsibility of public agencies to spread the word about it.

Another lesser-known fact is that law enforcement has the ability to move cars and cargo involved in a collision to improve traffic safety.

Matt Zintel, a trooper with the OSP's office in The Dalles, said safety takes priority over evidence when it comes to fatal traffic investigations.

Emergency responders are also getting assistance from a new law on the books. Drivers are required to either move to the left lane or decrease their speed to five miles per hour below the speed limit when passing by police or emergency personnel on the side of the road, but the law has been expanded to include any vehicle with their emergency lights on.

Local loan officers bring Guild Mortgage to Northeast Oregon



Oregon's #1 purchase lender now has offices in Pendleton and Hermiston.

Find out why so many homeowners go with Guild!



Pendleton Branch
Elaine Anderson
Sales Mgr. | Loan Officer
NMLS #487577
112 S. Main Street
Pendleton, OR 97801
O: 541.304.2069
C: 541.429.5029
eanderson@guildmortgage.net



Hermiston Branch
Katie Johnson
Loan Officer
NMLS #523220
1565 N. 1st St. #5
Hermiston, OR 97838
O: 541.371.5562
C: 541.720.2786
katie.johnson@guildmortgage.net

Staffed by well-known local residents, Guild Pendleton and Hermiston have the nationally-backed resources and local know-how to serve our unique region.

Guild Mortgage Company is an Equal Housing Lender; NMLS #3274. ML-176 distribution. #1 lender status based on the December 2016 Corelogic Report. (817071)



DEFEND EAR SHOOTER EAR PLUGS

Shooter ear plugs are specifically designed to fit into any ear without the need for ear impressions. The Shooter allows for clear communication, as well as enhanced ambient awareness. When a gunshot is fired, the electronic circuit instantly suppresses the loud noise, protecting your hearing!

- NRR 30 dB
- Output up to 86 dB
- Three amplification levels
- Wind noise reduction
- Low profile
- Universal fit
- Comfortable
- Hear conversations as normal
- No gun mount interference

Usable straight out of the box!
featuring state-of-the-art digital technology, the new Westone Shooter offers an affordable way to experience comprehensive electronic hearing protection.



RENATA ANDERSON M.A.
2237 Southwest • Court Place
Pendleton, OR 97801
541-276-5053


