

This app is bananas, B.A.N.A.N.A.S

By **JAYATI RAMAKRISHNAN**
STAFF WRITER

When two Hermiston High School juniors started their Technology and Web Development class at the beginning of the school year, they wanted to develop their skills and make something useful.

A few months later, they've created an app that got the attention of U.S. Rep. Greg Walden, and may be of help to a much wider audience.

Rogelio Lemus and Ethan Orozco created an app that was selected as the winner of the Congressional App challenge. They created the "B.A.N.A.N.A." (Basic App to Notify Authorities of Non-Authorized Abductions) app, which helps recognize photos uploaded to the app, and tells the user whether the photo matches anything in a statewide database for missing people.

Walden called the students to congratulate them on the app, and invited them to a reception in Washington, D.C., which the students hope to attend.

Orozco and Lemus said they came up with the idea for the app pretty quickly.

"It had been a while since I coded, so the first week was getting warmed up," Orozco said.

"I really wanted to use API," Lemus said. API, or



STAFF PHOTO BY KATHY ANEY

Hermiston High School juniors Rogelio Lemus, right, and Ethan Orozco developed a computer app that won the 2018 Congressional App Challenge for District 2. The app uses facial recognition to find missing people by uploading a photo and comparing it with a national database.

application programming interface, is a set of tools and methods for building software. The students used code created by someone else — a practice their teacher Robert Theriault said is com-

mon in programming — and rewrote portions of it to meet their specific needs.

"We were looking at a Face API that uses Javascript," Lemus said. "That was more on our level of

programming than most API. We were coming up with ideas to use it for, and we kind of agreed on our first idea."

Theriault said the students began programming in the second week of school. Though they borrowed code from someone else, they had to learn how it works and figure out how to make it work for their own app.

"The code they studied showed how to compare two specific faces," he said. "They had to rewrite it so it would compare other faces, not just those two."

They connected the app to a small sample of photos, to test if it works.

To make the app fully functional, Lemus and Orozco still need to upload the full database. There are currently photos of four missing people on the app now.

"It's still in beta testing," Theriault said. "They downloaded photos off of a website for missing people in Oregon."

The two only had a month to create the app, between the beginning of the school year and submitting it to the Congressional App competition.

Theriault said the students are members of a quickly growing computer science program.

"There's a lot of interest, and it's a growing pro-

gram," he said. "There's an AP (Advanced Placement) class that feeds into this one, which now has 20 students."

Hermiston has several computer science classes, including intro to computer science, AP computer science principle, and Technology and Web Development, as well as an independent study.

"When we got to D.C. the first year, we were one of a few public schools that won."

Robert Theriault,
Technology teacher

Theriault said though he's had a few students who have entered the app challenge before, he's found that many schools in eastern Oregon don't have a computer science program.

"In all fairness, we've only had one for two years," he said.

Two years ago, another

Hermiston student won the challenge, and traveled to D.C. for a reception.

"When we got to D.C. the first year, we were one of a few public schools that won," Theriault said. "There were a lot of tech schools and private schools."

Theriault said he's tried to find other opportunities for his students to develop their skills. They participate in a programming challenge at George Fox University. Still, he said, because it's in a bigger area, they're often competing against kids with a lot more tech experience, or parents who work at major technology companies.

Though they were most focused on the technical aspects of the app, Lemus and Orozco had some fun with it, too.

"It was pretty fun coming up with the name," said Lemus. "I wanted to come up with an acronym."

Though there was some debate about the name — the term "non-authorized abductions" made their teacher question what an "authorized abduction" would be — but they knew the name would help people recognize the app.

"You're not going to forget it," Lemus said.

"I haven't done anything like this before," Orozco said. "It challenged my skills and I was pretty happy with the results."

'Cutting-edge' bovine IVF treatments

By **JADE MCDOWELL**
STAFF WRITER

An international company pioneering new techniques of in-vitro fertilization for cows has its headquarters in Hermiston.

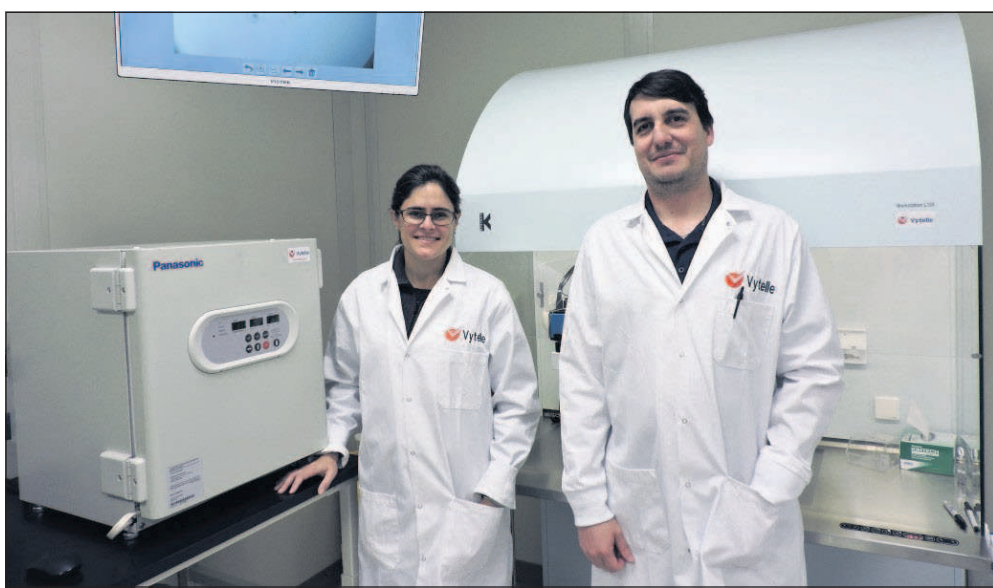
The company has been operating in Hermiston since 2015 but in August re-branded from Cogent IVF to Vytelle. The company provides services to the region from its Hermiston headquarters but also has sites in Idaho, California, Texas, Paraguay, Uruguay and South Africa.

Business director Luciano Bonilla said Vytelle is unique in several ways, including its "cutting-edge" hormone-free collection process for unfertilized eggs. The lack of stimulating hormones is easier on the animals, allows for weekly collection and requires no shot schedule.

Farmers and dairies using in-vitro fertilization can benefit from multiple calves born per year that are the biological offspring off their highest-producing milk cows, or animals that are superior in other ways.

"Naturally, one cow can give one calf per year," Bonilla said. "If they use this technique, they can get hundreds."

Farmers and dairies using Vytelle's services choose



STAFF PHOTO BY JADE MCDOWELL

Aline, left, and Luciano Bonilla of Vytelle are pictured in the company's lab. The screen above them shows lab-grown cow embryos ready to implant.

their best cows for harvest of unfertilized eggs, known as oocytes, which can be done by Vytelle technicians on the farm or at a collection location they have on GT Land & Cattle property. The process takes 10 to 15 minutes, after which the oocytes are taken to the Vytelle lab at 80383 N. Highway 395 and combined with sperm from a bull of the farmer's choosing, using human-grade IVF equipment.

Vytelle technicians then grow the embryos in special incubators and a rotation of serums over a seven-day period before freezing the embryos using a process

unique to the company, or immediately impregnating the desired number of cows.

Eight people total work out of the Hermiston office. Aline Bonilla, the research and development laboratory manager, said clients of the Hermiston lab come from all over Oregon, but they serve an especially high number of dairies from the Tillamook area.

Aline and Luciano are originally from Brazil and came to the United States for Ph.D. study and work. While they previously worked in Wisconsin for Vytelle's parent company WheatSheaf Group, Aline said there were

partnerships the company had in the Columbia Basin area that made sense for them to start what was then Cogent IVF in Hermiston instead of Wisconsin.

She said while most bovine IVF companies use a complicated pricing structure that charges at different junctures, Vytelle's production rate is so high that it only charges farms and dairies for the number of embryos it successfully creates.

"They pay for what they get," she said.

For more information about Vytelle, visit vytelle.com or call 866-689-3477.

BTW

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In Umatilla County, donations for the program can be submitted through the Echo or Stanfield libraries or the program's website. Books are picked by a selection committee. The books are chosen for their value in meeting needs of children as they progress in age.

For more information, contact the Echo (541-376-8411) or Stanfield (541-449-1254) libraries, **Erin McCusker** of the **Umatilla County Special Library District** at 541-276-6449 or director@umatillasd.org, or visit www.imaginationlibrary.com.

For the Morrow County program through the **Oregon Trail Library District**, contact **Friends of the Irrigation Library** at 541-481-3365.

'Tis the season for bazaar shopping. To get you warmed up, check out this Saturday's **Altrusa Holiday Bazaar** at the

Pendleton Convention Center. More than 90 vendors from across the region will be selling their wares from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. In addition, lunch is available for purchase. Also, there will be raffle drawings for gift baskets and \$2,000 in holiday cash. Admission is \$2, which benefits projects of **Altrusa International of Pendleton.** See next week's *Hermiston Herald* for other upcoming holiday bazaars.

Six Eastern Oregon residents competed in a Portland-area taekwondo tournament earlier this month. Members of the **Eastern Oregon Family Taekwondo** dojo competed at the Grandmaster's Cup in Gresham on Nov. 3. The competitors were **Aumari Black, 5, Kionna Idris, 14, Brock Meinke, 7, Abel Garcia, 10, Anita Meinke, and Melissa Shilhanek.**

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