

UPDATES

Morrow County Fair offers country fun

By TAMMY MALGESINI
COMMUNITY EDITOR

With a theme of Morrow County Country Strong, this year's Morrow County Fair got underway Tuesday, Aug. 17, and continues through Aug. 21 at the Morrow County Fairgrounds, 74473 Highway 74, Heppner. It runs daily from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m., and features open class displays, live music, a hypnotist and the traditional fair activities involving youth livestock projects.

Fair Secretary Ann Jones is excited to again offer free entry to the fair. She said they have worked hard to obtain sponsorships so people can merely walk through the gates.

"It just helps people out so more people can get out and enjoy the fair," Jones said.

Highlights of the fair, Jones said, includes lots of live music. Aug. 18 features Fat Bottomed Girls at 7 p.m. The evening also includes a best dressed '80s-themed contest. Friday evening brings Olivia Harms to the stage, playing country music.

Portland-based country-rock musician Nate Botsford performs Aug. 19 at 2:30 p.m. Also, an ice cream social featuring the Tillamook brand is at 3 p.m.

Botsford has performed at the Morrow County Fair several times and Jones said he's a crowd favorite. And the feelings are mutual — Jones said he loves to play music in Heppner.

Looking for something new to bring to this year's fair, the board decided on Justin James, a comedian and hypnotist who has performed in Las Vegas.

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Ben Lonergan/Hermiston Herald

Quinn Duff, of Milton-Freewater, shows his grand champion market goat Saturday, Aug. 14, 2021, at the Umatilla County Fair Youth Livestock Auction in Hermiston.

Emotions run high at livestock auction

By NICK ROSENBERGER
STAFF WRITER

Hundreds of attendees of all ages and from all corners of the Northwest gathered Saturday, Aug. 14, for the final day of the Umatilla County Fair and its annual Youth Livestock Auction at the Eastern Oregon Trade and Event Center.

Emotions ran high throughout the auction as youths said goodbye to their animals, while adults shouted bids trying to snag the prized animals. For many of the children involved, it was a bittersweet moment. After months of hard work, patience and dedication, it was time to say goodbye to those they'd formed a strong bond and connection with.

"I'm sad but I'm happy that I'll get more sheep and it'll happen again," said Elsie Bowman, a sixth grader from Echo who sold her lamb. "We've had struggles and good times."

After receiving awards earlier in the day, the children and teens spent their day receiving bids on the lambs, goats, steers, rabbits, turkeys and hogs that they have spent the last couple of months raising. Ford Bonney, Nick Nelson and Jack Seavert presided as the auctioneers who whipped the crowd into a buying frenzy and helped the day see the sale of more than 200 livestock.

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Ben Lonergan/Hermiston Herald

Buyers check in Saturday, Aug. 14, 2021, at the 2021 Umatilla County Fair Youth Livestock Auction in Hermiston.

A new generation of firefighters

By NICK ROSENBERGER
STAFF WRITER

The day starts as the sun rises for the new resident interns at Umatilla County Fire District 1. With darkness slowly fading around 5:45 a.m., the interns tug on their shoes and head out the door for an hour at the gym before getting ready to face the grueling 10-hour day in front of them.

The long hours might dispel some from even trying to become a firefighter, but for Tyler Couch, Dillon Tucker, Nick Donahue and Rylee Geddes, the hours are just a part of pursuing their dreams as they approach graduation from the fire district's academy on Aug. 20.

Nick Donahue, a recent grad of University High School in Spokane Valley, has wanted to become a firefighter since his sophomore year of high school. He knew he didn't want to sit at a desk job all day and desired something more exciting.

"I've also loved helping people and I've grown up helping people," Donahue said. "And whether that's just my close friends or my family or anything, I've just always had a heart for that so I decided to look into firefighting."

He asked his cousin, Jason Donahue, a firefighter in Spokane, for advice. His cousin showed him the station and took him on a few ride-alongs.

"And that's when I

really fell in love with it," Donahue said.

The program consists of structural and wildland firefighting along with emergency medical services and CPR. One day the interns may be learning how fires behave in the wild, while other days they'll be throwing ladders and hooking up fire hydrants.

The interns all noted how many of these lessons and activities have become competitive, which in turn has pushed them to be better firefighters. Couch, of Rigby, Idaho, said one of his favorite activities was competing with the other interns to see how fast they could put on their gear.

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Rylee Geddes, a resident intern with Umatilla County Fire District 1, uses a fire hose Tuesday, Aug. 10, 2021, at the district's training facility in Hermiston.

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