

Battle of the Books ends with a brawl

Panda Bears 2.0 takes Hermiston School District reading crown

ERICK PETERSON
Hermiston Herald

Their battle would not be denied. When the 2022 Oregon Battle of the Books was canceled due to the ongoing pandemic, Hermiston educators and students chose to have their own event.

"We decided to do our own thing," Miranda Hunt, librarian, said.

She explained that, as a statewide program, Battle of the Books is a big deal that needed to continue. In the contest, students within a given age group read the same 16 books. Then, they form groups of three or four. Teams compete against one another answering questions about the books they read.

In a normal year, Hermiston teams would be competing against teams from around the state. This year was different.

"We had to modify the program," Hunt said.



Hermiston School District/Contributed Photo

From left, Amelia Foy, Samuel Godby, Zach Adair and Larry Corralle of the Panda Bears 2.0 of Highland Hills Elementary School, Hermiston, pose at the end of Book Brawl on March 15, 2022.

Hunt and fellow librarian Alyxandra Rowe worked with students on this event for months, Hunt said. Students competed in five Hermiston elementary schools, and winners went head-to-head against one another to become the Hermiston School District Champions for the elementary division.

The final contest, the Book Brawl, was March 15. More than 50 students and supporters were at the contest, Hunt said.

Contestants read 16 books, a total 3,888 pages or 545,406 words. Students had to remember the title and author of each book, as well as basic information.

The librarian said a typ-

ical question was, "What color hair does Johnny have?" They might also have to answer, "How old is Suzie?" or "What is Brandon's favorite food."

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Here are the winners

First place went to Panda Bears 2.0 of Highland Hills Elementary School. The team is comprised of Amelia Foy, Samuel Godby, Zach Adair and Larry Corralle. Angie Cooke, teacher, coached the team.

The Pandas received medals for their victory. In addition, their school received a plaque with their names on it. This plaque will be hung in the Highland Hills library, Hunt said.

Novel Rebellion of Desert View Elementary School took second. Team Scorpion of Rocky Heights Elementary School won third. The Fantastic Four were fourth place. And the Book Hunters scored fifth.

All of these teams were champions at their own

schools. As such, they received certificates for their achievement. Also, they were given drawstring backpacks filled with prizes.

Everyone is a winner

Hunt said there are no losers in the competition. The goal, she said, was to encourage reading. Since this is the case, everyone who took part in the contest at any level was a winner; each participant read something.

"It's a great opportunity to work on vocabulary, spend time with friends and get excited about books," Hunt said. "The books were a variety of books, from mystery to fantasy, realistic fiction, biography and graphic novels. They were exposed to different types of reading materials, and they had fun."

The 16 books

The books were "Astrid the Unstoppable" by Maria Parr; "The Bookwanderers" by Anna James; "The Care and Feeding of a Pet Black Hole" by Michelle Cuevas; "Clean Getaway" by Nic Stone; "The Fourteenth

Goldfish" by Jennifer L. Holm; "Guts" by Raina Telgemeier; "The Harlem Charade" by Tatasha Tarpley; "I Can Make this Promise" by Christine Day; "Lety Out Loud" by Angela Cervantes; "Lowriders in Space" by Cathy Camper and Raul the Third; "Sarah Journeys West" by Nikki Shannon Smith; "Save Me a Seat" by Sarah Weeks and Gita Varadarajan; "Some Places More than Others" by Renee Watson; "Some Writer! The Story of E.B. White" by Melissa Sweet; "Stay" by Bobbie Pyron; and "The Storm Keeper's Island" by Catherine Doyle.

These books remain available to students, Hunt said. Anyone who missed the contest still can read the books. She added that everyone is welcome to next year's contest, as preparation begins in September.

She said she is looking forward to a regular contest with play between regional and statewide matches.

"Though the Book Brawl was successful, and it was fun to have the kids and parents there in person, we can't wait to get back," she said.

Good Shepherd Community Health Foundation awards \$99,065 in grants

Hermiston Herald

Spring grants in the amount of \$99,065 will be donated to organizations in west Umatilla and Morrow Counties this month, according to a Good Shepherd Community Health Foundation press release.

Good Shepherd named several organizations that will benefit.

The Arc of Umatilla County will receive money to fund activity nights, camps, and other disability awareness events.

Boardman Parks and Recreation, the City of Hermiston, Good Shepherd Community Health and Outreach, GSCHC

Emergency Department, the Hermiston Police Department, Made to Thrive, the Oregon East Symphony, the Seventh-day Adventist Church, Trucare Pregnancy Clinic, the Umatilla County Sheriff's Office and Umatilla County Search and Rescue are other beneficiaries.

Grant money covers a wide variety of projects, including teen counseling services, concert production, an officer wellness program and a rescue drone.

Grant funding is made possible by planned giving and community support, the release states.

"Because we live in

an area where the culture is to make our communities better, residents consistently give to the Good Shepherd Community Health Foundation," stated Liz Marvin, Foundation executive director. "The next grant cycle will close the end of July and we encourage nonprofit organizations to apply for funding."

To apply for a grant awarded this fall, submit applications by July 31 online at www.gshealth.org/gschf-grant-application or by mail via application that may be downloaded and printed at <https://www.gshealth.org/awards>. For more information, call 541-667-3419.

Mission report from Kenya

By TAMMY MALGESINI
Hermiston Herald

Stanley Gitari, director of Maua Methodist Hospital Community Health Services, will be visiting Hermiston to provide an update on mission work in Kenya. An experienced speaker, he will share about community health, programs to help orphan children, the effects of famine in Africa and much more.

"There are people from Walla Walla to Heppner, Pendleton and La Grande who are/have been involved with this project," said Pastor Patty Nance of the Hermiston First United Methodist Church.

Anyone interested in hearing about this outreach ministry in Kenya, including how to get involved, is encouraged to attend. The free presentation is April 3, 5 p.m. at the Hermiston First United Methodist Church, 191 E. Gladys Ave.

Hermiston residents Louise and Jamie Kienzle have taken several trips to Kenya to work at the hospital and surrounding area. As part of the April 3 presentation, Louise will share about other upcoming opportunities:

- To participate in a Virtual Mission to Maua Methodist Hospital, April 6 and 8, 8-9:30 a.m.

- To join a team heading to Kenya in 2023 to build a home for AIDS orphans and support other projects related to health and education.

The Kienzles, who first went to Kenya in 2009, are especially excited about what's happening across the globe in East Africa. Living in John Day at the time, the couple was motivated to get involved in mission work after their pastor encouraged



Patty Nance/Contributed Photo

Louise Kienzle of Hermiston hands keys to a family during a January 2018 house dedication in Maua, Kenya. Stanley Gitari, director of Maua Methodist Hospital Community Health Services, is in the background with a camera. He will provide an update about the Kenyan outreach ministry at 5 p.m. April 3, 2022, at the Hermiston First United Methodist Church.

the church council to look beyond their immediate area and state.

"We did a lot of things in the community," Louise Kienzle said. "I thought this is my chance, this is a cue for me to jump in."

And jump, she did — since that first trip in 2009, the Kienzles have returned to Kenya six times. And they are planning to lead a team in July 2023.

A typical trip, she said, includes building a house for the family of an AIDS orphan, as well as going to the schools to provide de-worming and working with an outreach program for the hospital, providing basic medical services.

Those seen are weighed, have their blood pressure checked and often get tested for AIDS and other medical conditions. People can obtain eyeglasses or needed medications. People, Kienzle said, walk for miles to be seen at the "medical camp."

Medical experience isn't required to participate in the mission trips, Kienzle said. One of their roles, she said, is to promote the hospi-

tal by helping alleviate people's fears about going there. Also, Kienzle said people don't have to belong to the United Methodist Church to get involved.

"Anyone interested in mission work and learning about another culture is invited to come," she said.

Gitari, the press release said, has been the inspiration and organizing force behind the ongoing relationships between American teams and their mission work in the area of Maua, Kenya. As a nurse and hospital administrator with a master's degree in community health from Ghana University, and as a committed man of faith, Gitari has worked tirelessly to help the people in that area who suffer from extreme poverty.

Additional information, including a link to the upcoming Virtual Mission, is available by searching www.facebook.com/OR.ID-KenyaMissionTeams. For questions, contact Kienzle at umvim@umoi.org, 541-620-0989 or Nance at herfume@outlook.com.

Irrigon classroom fire ruled an accident

By ERICK PETERSON
Hermiston Herald

The fire that closed Irrigon Junior/Senior High School on March 8 was an accident, according to Casey Kump, deputy state fire marshal.

"We had an accidental fire in the back of a classroom," he said.

The fire was in the junior high wing of the school at 6 a.m., before students and most staff had arrived.

According to Kump, the fire was detected by a school custodian, who smelled smoke in a hallway. He checked a door and found it hot, then peered in an outside window to see the smoke, Kump said.

"We had some materials that were just stacked on top of an electrical cord, just accidentally placed there," he said.

The weight of the materials pressing down on the electrical cord, he said, was to blame for the fire.

Kump added this sort of fire is common, "one of those things that sneaks up on people here and there."

He said there would be no charges filed against anyone for this fire because it was an accident.

"It's good that there was no one there, so they didn't have to evacuate," Kump said.

Though an evacuation was not needed, the Morrow County School District did close the school for the day. The district announced on Facebook that the school's students would move to virtual learning for March 9 and 10.

Principal Ryan Keefauver said virtual learning could last longer, depending on the recommendations from the cleanup crew and insurance company.

Dirk Dirksen, Morrow County School District superintendent, provided an estimate of returning. On March 9, he said the school could be closed to students until after spring break, which started Monday, March 21. He said the classroom with the fire would not be used until next school year.

Irrigon Rural Fire Protection District firefighters worked on the blaze. Fire Chief Larry Burns said the fire was large enough to require a hose; an extinguisher could not have doused the flames.

The Irrigon firefighters were joined by another local group. Mike Hughes, Boardman Fire Rescue District chief, said his firefighters also responded.

"When we arrived, Irrigon Fire had made entry through the front," Hughes said. "We were redirected to the rear of the school."

Entering through the back, Boardman Fire officers learned the fire was limited to a single classroom.

Speaking on March 9, Hughes said there were no injuries.

Keefauver said he was thankful no one was hurt and this is a learning opportunity for the school, the district and the community. People should be on the lookout for items that may be stacked on top of electrical cords, he said.

"It is a devastating situation that could have been a lot worse," Dirksen said.

He stated that if the fire happened in the middle of the night, it could have spread throughout more of the school before being detected. If it occurred during the school day, he said, people could have been hurt.

Oregon senator to hold virtual town hall for Morrow County

Hermiston Herald



Merkley

The Boardman Chamber of Commerce is hosting a virtual town hall with Oregon Senator Jeff Merkley on Wednesday, March 23. It is his 23rd digital town hall of the year and his 491st open town hall since first being elected to the Senate, accord-

ing to a chamber of commerce press release.

People may join the town hall online or on the telephone to discuss issues that are important to them.

"In these uncertain times, it's more important than ever to hear directly from you, but it's also important to respect the health and

safety of every member of our communities while there is still a risk of spreading COVID-19 through in-person gatherings," the press release states.

The Morrow County Town Hall starts at 4:30 p.m. Call 669-254-5252, enter meeting ID 1609919028# and passcode 43332369. To join online, visit bit.ly/3txd4SH.



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