

Fair

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Burke, a Pendleton resident who is serving his first year on the board, is one of the volunteers.

He said he looks after emergency medical services and outdoor vendors, though he added he helps out with other activities, too.

Working throughout the year, he said he has not kept track of the total hours he puts into the fair, though he figured it is "substantial." During fair week alone, he said he could work up to 20 hours a day.

On a slow day during fair week, he only works 14 hours.

Burke explained his dedication, saying he has been coming to the fair for 20 years. He spent years assisting in FFA and 4-H, he said. As such, he said he witnessed the fair had value; it gave young people something to do, and it made them happy.

Burke's story is not unique, as other volunteers on Aug. 11, said they work long days, too.

Micheal Hampton, fellow board director and Echo resident, said he also puts in several hours a day in dedication to the fair.

"It's a big team," he said of the army of individuals who support the fair.

In charge of animals and the parade, he was volunteering at the fair with other family members, including his daughter Gina Hampton and nephew Dominick Sharp.

Gina, 15, was helping her dad set up equipment in the animal barns. She described her situation as being "born into" fair work.

A member of FFA and 4-H, she said she enjoys helping with the fair and making it possible for other people to present their animals.

She said that her cousin, 5-year-old Sharp, also is being prepared for fair work. The young boy accompanies older family members for now, "doing what he can," according to Gina, and he is learning what it takes to be a better volunteer



Sandy McKay, left, and Ellery Jones look at work that needs to be done Thursday, Aug. 11, 2022, at the Umatilla County Fair, Hermiston.

in the future.

Gina said it is not easy to volunteer at the fair, but it is fun and it makes her happy, especially when she is present with her father, cousins and other family members.

"It gives me a good feeling," she said.

Volunteers Sandy McKay and Ellery Jones said they are pleased to give their labor and time to the fair. In their regular jobs, McKay and Jones are ag advisors at Hermiston High School. During the fair, they volunteer their labor from 6 a.m. to past 9 p.m. every day.

This is worthwhile, still, they said, because they want to assist students who are presenting their animals. Hermiston High alone has 37 students with animals at the fair, they said. Other young peo-

ple are present, too, and the advisors said they like to provide guidance.

"I love it," McKay said. "It's the best job in the world."

Jones agreed, adding she was born and raised locally, attended the fair regularly and is glad to be helping out now.

Lori Browning, Lions Club member, was among the people selling hamburgers and other treats. The principal of Sandstone Elementary, Browning said she enjoys volunteering for the fair as one of the things she does for others.

"It's something I do to give back to the community," Browning said. "Anything like this can't be bad."

As with other volunteers, Browning said she is planning to return next year to volunteer again.



Above: From left, Lori Browning, Tabor Mills and Dave Melville smile for a picture Thursday, Aug. 11, 2022, at the Umatilla County Fair, Hermiston. The three people were among volunteers at the Lions Club booth. Below: Kelley Burke, a member of the Umatilla County Fair Board of Directors, poses in his cart Thursday, Aug. 11, 2022, at the fair in Hermiston.



Photos by Erick Peterson/Hermiston Herald



Gina Hampton, left, and her dad, Micheal Hampton, bring buckets to the animal barns Thursday, Aug. 11, 2022, at the Umatilla County Fair, Hermiston. The pair are volunteers and stated they enjoy their work.

EPA

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Kowalski encouraged the state to regulate industrial discharge and animal feeding operations through a permitting system established by the EPA's National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System.

Before ending the letter, Kowalski left the door open to the EPA taking emergency action in Eastern Oregon.

"The Agency will continue to closely monitor the situation and continues to assess options for

additional Agency intervention if necessary," he wrote.

State agencies outline their efforts Responding to requests for comment, representatives from the Oregon departments of environmental quality and agriculture explained the enforcement work they already were doing while also emphasizing the barriers to expanding it further.

DEQ's Laura Gleim reiterated the agency's position on enforcement: It would take action where it could, but its reach was limited.

"DEQ is using what regula-

tory authority we have to reduce nitrate contamination from specific sources, including enacting stricter limits on food processing wastewater facilities," she wrote in an email. "However, DEQ only has regulatory authority over a small portion of the identified sources of nitrate in this area."

Liz Beeles of ODA said her agency would continue to monitor and regulate groundwater pollution from animal feeding operations and certain irrigated agriculture. But the latter could be difficult to track.

"The current monitoring framework makes it difficult to identify specific irrigated agricultural nutrient sources and link them to water quality outcomes in groundwater," she wrote.

Beeles added the department was looking into ways to "support or enhance" voluntary measures proposed in a 2020 plan.

Instead of focusing on enforcement, Oregon Health Au-

thority spokesperson Jonathan Modie detailed his agency's legislative efforts.

In an email, Modie wrote that OHA will seek money from the Emergency Board for well treatment systems and replacement water filters for affected households through June 2023.

During the Legislature's long session next year, OHA plans to ask for money to pay for a new domestic well safety coordinator

position, among other things.

Morrow County Emergency Manager Paul Gray, who has helped coordinate the county's emergency response to the nitrate pollution, did not return requests for comment.

Scott Lukas, the committee chair of the Lower Umatilla Basin Groundwater Management Area, was traveling and said he would not be able to comment at the time.



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