



Vintage wheels roll to Winthrop

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Fall sports: A look at this season's athletes

THE OKANOGAN-COUNTY CHRONICLE

September 11, 2019

Essential Reading for Okanogan and Ferry counties • Year 110 No. 34

\$1.25

Small, human-like skull found near Ellisforde

Anthropologist notified to research

By DEE CAMP
The Chronicle

ELLISFORDE — Discovery of a small, human-like skull on Nigg Drive has left Okanogan County Coroner Dave

Rodriguez scratching his head. Rodriguez said some children out on four-wheelers came across the skull and took it home, where adults then stepped in. Reports indicate the Okanogan County Sheriff's Office was notified around 6:25 p.m. Aug. 31. Deputies took possession of

the skull, which was missing the jawbone, and then contacted Rodriguez. "It looks like a mini human head," said Rodriguez. "It fits in the palm of your hand." He said the skull appears to be very old and "is in bad shape." It has mature teeth, so is not likely to be from an infant, he said.

The canine teeth are missing. Rodriguez said he photographed the skull and notified the state anthropologist. He's awaiting word back on the type of animal to which the skull belonged. "I'm interested to hear what they say," he said. He speculated the skull might

be from a monkey. "It would be monkey sized," he said. A private zoo, Feathers and Friends Zoo, operated in the area about 20 years ago, although Rodriguez said he's not aware of that facility having any monkeys. The zoo was known for

having large cats, including a lion that once escaped and was found nearby. A check of Chronicle files for the time — incidents involving the zoo's owners led the county to pass an exotic animal ordinance in 2004 — indicated another man, who lived in Aeneas Valley, raised monkeys.

County fair dubbed success

Gate admission up from last year

By BROCK HIRES and DEE CAMP
The Chronicle

OKANOGAN — Okanogan County Fair Advisory Committee members are calling this year's fair a success. During a regular committee meeting Monday, Sept. 9, commissioners learned gate admissions for the four-day event were up by about \$15,000, according to Okanogan County Commissioner Andy Hover.

Hover, who presented financial figures on behalf of Okanogan County Treasurer Leah McCormack, said preliminary figures indicate the fair made approximately \$15,000 more than last year in gate admissions.

Hover said gate admissions during the fair were \$84,370, compared to last year's figure of around \$78,000.

He said total funds deposited to the county as of Friday were \$33,212, bringing the total gate admissions to \$117,582.

"The fair was good this year," Hover said. "Without you guys (fair committee members) we can't do it."

"Everyone works together very, very well," Okanogan County Fair Advisory Committee Chairman Mike Egerton echoed noting the volunteers.

Fair leaders attributed some of the increase admissions to the return of the Davis Shows Northwest carnival.

Livestock coordinator Sam Buchert said the market stock sale brought in about \$420,000 with one hog selling for \$16 per pound.

Additional details about the stock sale were not available at press time.

Okanogan County Sheriff Tony Halvey echoed fair leaders.

"We had a pretty good fair from our perspective," he said Monday afternoon. "A few calls which most were handled fairly quickly."

The Omak Volunteer Fire Department accepted donations at its ice cream booth to help injured Okanogan firefighter Christian Johnson, who was burned Sept. 1 in the Spring Coulee Fire.

"The general public really stepped up big time," said Omak Fire Chief Kevin Bowling, who said donations totaled \$7,078 for the weekend.

The Omak department also will donate proceeds from its Friday sales to Johnson. Some bills were still outstanding as of Monday, so Bowling didn't have a figure yet. He said he expects another couple thousand dollars will be donated.

Ice cream sales went very well throughout the weekend — so much so that the booth shut down about 8 p.m. Saturday when ice cream ran out. It didn't open on Sunday.

Off to the races



BROCK HIRES | The Chronicle

Racers compete Saturday afternoon at the annual Okanogan County Fair horse races. For more coverage of the races and rodeo, see page B6-B7.

Thunderstorm pummels county

By DEE CAMP
The Chronicle

OKANOGAN — A fierce thunderstorm pummeled Okanogan County for several hours early Sept. 8 after pounding western Washington and rolling across the Cascades.

Minimal damage was done, despite all the flashes of lighting, crashes of thunder and splashes of rain.

"There was nothing much," said Okanogan County Emergency

Manager Maurice Goodall. He said the U.S. Forest Service had a road problem north of Mazama and some individuals may have had minor flooding or gravel washed away, but nothing was reported on a major scale.

Robin DeMario, spokeswoman for the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest, said a small slide was reported on Hart's Pass Road north of Mazama. Crews cleared some of the debris, but people are advised to stay

out of the area since the slide may still be active, especially with more rainfall in the forecast.

There's no estimate on when repairs will occur.

Crews were still out Monday morning looking for other damage, she said.

The National Weather Service issued a flash flood warning for the area and, through Okanogan

See **STORM**, page A11

Navy chopper rescues injured climber

MAZAMA — A man climbing Lexington Tower near Liberty Bell Mountain fell some 1,300 feet and had to be airlifted from the mountain Friday, Sept. 6.

The 39-year-old man, whose name was not released, is from London, England, and was free climbing on the east side of Lexington Tower with another man from Vancouver, B.C., said Okanogan County Sheriff Tony Hawley.

"The climber sustained severe injuries and was not able to self-rescue," Hawley said. "The person he was climbing with observed the fall and was required to hike out to Highway 20 and drive to a phone near Winthrop."

The sheriff's office and Aero Methow Ambulance were dispatched about 4:15 p.m. Okanogan County Search and Rescue, a volunteer organization, also responded.

"On my arrival it was determined that air assets would be required to extract the injured party," said Hawley.

Whidbey Island Naval Air Station was contacted and responded.

In the meantime, Okanogan County Search and Rescue deployed two technical high angle team members and three Aero Methow

See **INJURED**, page A11

Injured firefighter begins recovery

Hundreds have donated to help Johnson family

By DEE CAMP
The Chronicle

OKANOGAN — An Okanogan firefighter who was badly burned in a Sept. 1 wildfire underwent skin graft surgeries Sept. 5 and 6, and continues recovering at Harborview Medical Center.

Christian Johnson, Okanogan Fire Department assistant chief, suffered second- and third-degree burns over 60 percent of his body while on the Spring Coulee Fire. The incident is under investigation by the state Department of Natural Resources and Okanogan County Sheriff's Office.

Johnson, who was flown from the scene, is in a medically induced coma at Harborview. As of Monday morning, Sept. 9, he was listed in satisfactory condition in the intensive care unit.

Surgery Sept. 5 concentrated on Johnson's chest and abdomen. The following day's surgery dealt with his arms, top of hands, shoulder and sides, according to family friend Amy Freel, who organized a gofundme.com page to benefit Johnson and his family.

"The doctor came in smiling after today's surgery," said the family, as reported by Freel. "Hopefully Christian will be strong enough for surgery again on Monday or Wednesday" of this week.

Johnson is expected to spend two to three months in the intensive care unit, according to Okanogan County Emergency Management.

His wife, Pam, who works for the Okanogan County Treasurer's Office, is with him.

Johnson also serves as building official for Okanogan, Tonasket and Oroville, and was scheduled to be temporary building official for Omak after the retirement of Jake Dalton.

On Sept. 3, Okanogan County commissioners approved an interlocal agreement with the four cities for county building inspectors to provide some services. (See related story.)

Cause of the fire and events leading up to Johnson's injuries are being investigated by DNR and the sheriff's office.

DNR spokeswoman Janet Pearce said no investigation results are available yet.

Okanogan County Sheriff Tony Hawley said his office is assisting DNR.

Okanogan County Emergency

See **JOHNSON**, page A11



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