



The East County JOURNAL

Dedicated to serving East Lewis County since 1945

August 12, 2026

\$1

Vol. 82 No. 32 • USPS 363-940



Drone photo by Chris Johnson

A drone captured the crowd on Friday night getting ready for the Lawnmower Races at the Morton Loggers' Jubilee.

83rd Loggers' Jubilee draws crowds for weekend of fun

BY AMBER BROWN
East County Journal

The Morton Loggers' Jubilee celebrated its 83rd anniversary this year. Among the planning and events were returning faces,

like the Grand Marshall's Mike and Sheryl Fairhart, or the Belle and Bull of the Wood Erin LaVoie and Nate Hodges. There were some missing faces, like this year's dedication to Linda Mettler, who had been a huge part of the Jubilee for so

many years. She will be missed by those who knew her. Her legacy at the Morton Loggers' Jubilee will live on.

There was a successful new event, Cornhole Tournament, which took place at the Timber River Connections Morton

senior center. Many teams entered and all had fun.

The annual parade was a success. Morton's infamous bicycle gang made an appearance and have announced their new name, Morton Redneck Mafia. Be on

the lookout for them as they roam Morton looking for good ol' fashioned fun.

Every community event depends on the time and efforts of the volunteers involved. To join the team email loggersjubilee@gmail.com.

No adverse findings during district audit

BY BUDDY ROSE
The East County Journal

Commissioners for Lewis County Hospital District No. 1 reviewed results of the audit recently conducted by the Washington State Auditor during the regular hospital district board meeting on July 29. The audit included two parts, accountability and finances. Results were presented to the board by two representatives from the State Auditor's Office attending the meeting online.

The accountability audit covered the period Jan. 1, 2025 through Dec. 31, 2025. It examined the following areas that represent high risk for fraud, loss, abuse or noncompliance: Accounts payable, self-insurance, surplus equipment, contract compliance, open public meetings and financial condition. The audit findings stated the district complied, in all material respects, with applicable state laws, regulations and district policies as well as providing adequate controls over the safeguarding of public resources.

The financial audit covered

statements and records between Jan. 1, 2024 and Dec. 31, 2025 and was performed in accordance with Government Auditing Standards. In the opinion of the auditors, the financial statements presented fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of Arbor Health and changes to the position and cash flows at the end of that period in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles.

In other business at the board meeting, commissioners commented on the Rural Hospital Leadership Conference they all attended in June at Chelan. Commissioner Craig Coppock said it was a good conference and noted Arbor Health was one of 13 rural hospitals in Washington to receive a quality award at the conference. Commissioner Chris Schumaker said the quality award was the result of input from everyone at the hospital. He added that the conference provided a good opportunity to communicate with the boards of other hospitals. Hospital District CEO Max Neal noted the quality

See **Arbor Health** Page 2

FedEx van catches fire in Packwood

BY AMBER BROWN
East County Journal

A Packwood community was surprised when reports that a FedEx truck had caught fire in the neighborhood of High Valley Park 8/11. The inferno happened at the intersection of Cowlitz View Drive and Maple Way on Thursday, Aug. 6.

Alesha Seiber said she was in her bedroom when she heard a noise that made her investigate. She looked out of the kitchen window when she saw the FedEx truck was on fire. She yelled for her dad to call 911 as she ran out to get a hose going.

"I could see sparks flying off of the truck and landing in our yard. It is too dry for something like that, and I worried that our house would catch fire," Seiber said.

She was not the only one in the neighborhood to run for a hose. "Terry Blattler grabbed a garden hose to help suppress the fire and keep it from spreading while waiting for the fire department to arrive, approximately 15 minutes later," High Valley said in an official statement to the community. Blattler agreed that this was what he did.

"The driver really deserves recognition for trying to get the van out of our neighborhood. Certainly, scary stuff when it's 90 degrees out and something like



Courtesy Sarah Barnett

Looking down Maple Way in Packwood's High Valley Park 8/11 at the FedEx van that caught fire on Thursday, Aug. 6.

this happens right next to some brushy trees," Blattler said.

"According to the fire department, Blattler's quick actions significantly reduced the risk of the fire spreading. They stated that had he not acted as quickly as he did, the situation could have become a much larger

fire threat to the surrounding properties," the High Valley statement said.

After the fire department was on scene, Seiber and the FedEx driver (no one got his name) were chatting, and he told her

See **FedEx** Page 3

Packwood Trail Project accepted for initial phase

BY AMBER BROWN
East County Journal

The Packwood Trail Project (PTP) has been working towards the creation of a low elevation trail since its inception in 2017. They were finally invited by the U.S. Forest Service to submit a formal proposal for the initial phase of work needed by the PTP, to be considered for the 2027 work plan. If the scope of work is approved by the U.S. Forest Service, then trail work could begin as early as the 2028.

PTP has been working towards the long-term goal of creating a low elevation trail that would encircle Packwood. This low elevation trail would be accessible year-round. Typical snow level elevation sits around 2,000 feet

each year and the proposed trail would be lower than that so it could be hiked during the shoulder and winter seasons.

Some of the proposed side shoots of the main trail are called a lollipop loop. "A lollipop loop is where the person follows a trailhead into the trail, then follows a circular loop which leads them back to the same trailhead," PTP board member Elise Woodsmith said.

She described a lollipop loop as ideal for people who are not familiar with the Gifford Pinchot Forest. It gives them an easy to follow path into the second growth forest to a destination, like a waterfall, and then back to either their car, a short-term

See **Trail project** Page 2

Camp Read-A-Lot returning for second year in Morton

BY AMBER BROWN
East County Journal

Camp Read-A-Lot is a multi-day program full of activities, education and fun for community children. Family Circles is hosting its second annual Camp Read-A-Lot for children ages 3 to 10 from Aug. 17 to 20, at the Morton United Methodist Church.

Founder Christina Brischetto said that the event will have an interactive story time, outdoor activities, crafts, free books and

prizes. All of the volunteers have had background checks and "most work in education, either as teachers or substitute teachers," Brischetto said.

Family Circles originally started because Brischetto has a background in Library Management and wanted to bring book accessibility to children in the Morton area, which is lacking a public library. However, as she got to know the community more she learned that there were other needs that Family Circles could meet.

One of the biggest needs that Family Circles could meet was childcare. After school programs and summer programs would help meet the needs of the community, especially parents who were in the educational field.

To this end, Family Circles was able to secure the Gesa Credit Union Local Heroes grant. Last year, this grant allowed Camp Read-A-Lot to cover the funding for low-income children and children from parents in

See **Camp** Page 2