

Dr. Seuss night, 100 school days, all part of White Pass action
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Outdoors: Illahee, Mossyrock garden clubs are preparing for spring planting
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Mossyrock's Sadi Rashoff struck out seven Timberwolves on the mound at the Toledo jamboree on Saturday
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County hosts hearing on Mossy cell tower plan

BY BUDDY ROSE
East County Journal

Lewis County Community Development hosted a public hearing on Friday, March 13, regarding a proposed cell tower to be installed on Skyview Drive, near Mossyrock on the hill north of town where Dunn Cemetery is located.

Lewis County Hearing Examiner Mark Scheibmeir presided over the hearing that included testimony for and against the proposal. About 30 people attended the hearing in person with a number of others participating online. Scheibmeir made no decision after the hearing but stated that a decision would occur within about a month.

The 150-foot-tall monopole tower is

proposed for installation at 262 Skyview Drive on property owned by Kevin Riffle of Kirkland. The applicant is Harmoni Towers/North Group of Snohomish in conjunction with Verizon Wireless. The original application to the county was dated July 18, 2025. A report dated Feb. 6, 2026, by Preston Pinkston, Lewis County Community Development Planner, recommended approval of the tower construction.

At the hearing, Pinkston stated wireless communication facilities such as the tower are allowed in all county land use planning codes. He noted it will be located in a mixed stand of conifer and deciduous trees and a landscaping plan, including

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Agencies, individuals lauded for aid during 2005 flooding

BY AMBER BROWN
East County Journal

At the regular meeting of the Packwood Improvement Club on Monday, March 9, County Commissioners Scott Brummer, Lindsey Pollock and Sean Swope were part of a ceremony to award certificates of appreciation to the many entities that assisted during the December 2025 flooding emergency in East Lewis County.

Erika Katt, deputy director of the Department of Emergency Manage-

ment, presented certificates to Lewis County Sheriff's office, Swiftwater Rescue Team, Lewis County Fire District 14 Randle, Packwood Inn and Timber River Connections Packwood.

Mindy Brooks, director of Community Development, presented certificates to Ron and Jeanette Blankenship, Commerce Meadows, Packwood Search and Rescue and LCFD 10 Packwood.

Commissioner Brummer presented certificates to Public Works Director

Jeff Soderquist, Area Seven Maintenance Shed and Department of Fish and Wildlife's Elliot Johnson.

Kirsty Ward presented certificates to the Salvation Army and United Way of Lewis County.

In addition to those being awarded, there were many residents of Packwood and Randle who attended as well as representatives of Toledo Fire and Rescue.

In other news, the meeting continued with a pre-

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Ric Hallock | East County Journal

Repair and reuse

Toledo, Washington resident Karen Edwards volunteered her sewing services as she patches up a reflective vest for Morton resident Nyla Rich, not pictured, as part of the county's Sustainability Fair that was hosted at Timber River Connections Morton senior center on Saturday, March 14.

Arbor Health medical massage program working out kinks

BY AMBER BROWN
East County Journal

The medical massage program in the Arbor Health Hospital physical therapy department has been growing slowly since its creation in 2019.

"The program began with massage therapist Sami-Jo Vertz, who worked with physical therapists in other places prior. It took a little while to get the paperwork and processes settled," Director of Rehabilitation and Community Wellness Edwin Meelhuysen said.

During the process of beginning a medical massage program

through the hospital, Meelhuysen researched the local area to determine how much of an impact the program would have on local practitioners. "It was important to the board that we didn't negatively impact them," he said.

He wants the program to be good for the community. "Our pricing is to have us break even. We are not out to make money," Meelhuysen said.

To that end, he occasionally checks in on the market and adjusts the prices accordingly. Most of the people using the program



Danica Gering



Edwin Meelhuysen



Michelle Herron

if the number of clients continues to grow then it is a consideration. "Our massage therapists are booked out for a couple of weeks and there are two of them," he said.

They each work between 24 and 30 hours per week and between the two there is coverage five days a week. Meelhuysen estimates that they see roughly 100 patients a month.

Medical massage is physically difficult for the therapist's body. Thirty hours per week is considered full time work in the mas-

sage world. There are technically two parts to the medical massage therapists' job, half is to do the hands-on work with the patient and the other half is to update all of the records at the end of the session.

Danica Gering graduated from the National Holistic Institute in the San Francisco Bay area in 2014. She is a medical massage practitioner, certified Ashiatsu Deep Feet therapist and did her clinical hours in 2014.

"My goal for massage treatment is to effectively relieve or reduce pain, stress or muscula-

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Josh Austin courtesy photo | East County Journal

Steve Mayer, president of the Mineral Lake Lions Club, addresses a crowd at the Mineral food bank on Monday, March 9, before a ribbon cutting on the locations newly expanded space.

Thanks to donors, Mineral food bank grows

BY AMBER BROWN
East County Journal

The expansion of the Daily Bread Mineral food bank is complete. On Monday, March 9, Pastor Josh Austin hosted a ribbon cutting to celebrate the completion and allow people to see what the finished area looked like.

The new building allows the storage area to expand by 300 percent, Austin said. They used part of an existing building and added 1,260 feet of new space. This allows both a walk-in refrigerator and

walk-in freezer to be installed.

The total cost of the project was roughly \$145,000 and was funded through grants and donations. They received a \$110,000 grant from the International Lions Club. In early December, the Daily Bread food bank also received a grant for \$15,000 from the Puyallup Tribe of Indians Charity Trust Board.

The food bank serves between 100-120 families per week which equates to roughly 300 people per week.

The Daily Bread food bank is open from noon to 3 p.m., every Wednesday.

Testing scores discussed at Morton School Board

BY AMBER BROWN
East County Journal

The Morton School Board was presented with information regarding the testing of the students at the regular meeting on Monday, Feb. 23. This is part two of three for testing the students to find out if they are ready for the state's required testing. The first presentation was given at the Nov. 24 meeting.

Elementary Principal Stephen Vance reported that the kindergartners scored 58 percent in reading. They are not evaluated on math. The first-grade students scored 70 percent in reading and 75 percent in math. The second-grade students scored 58 percent in reading and 57 percent in math. The third-grade students scored 52 percent in reading and 65 percent in math. The fourth-grade students scored 56 percent in reading and 62 percent in math.

For comparison, the average reading score in the fall test was 47 percent and in the winter testing it was at 59 percent. For the average math statistics, the fall test score was 56 percent and in the winter testing it was 65 per-

cent.

Vance acknowledged that there was a drop in score for the third-grade students. He believes that there are two reasons for this. One was that there were a number of students who left the school district and a number of them that moved into the school district. Their numbers changed the overall score. The other reason was that even though the students showed improvement with their own skills, the metric for what they are proposed to score was higher than they actually tested.

Intermediate Assistant Principal Kim Thompson reported on the fifth- and sixth-grade students. The fifth-grade students scored 51 percent in reading and 46 percent in math. The sixth-grade students scored 74 percent in reading and 57 percent in math.

For comparison, the average reading score in the fall test was 39 percent and 63 percent in the winter. The average math score in the fall was 38 percent and 52 in the winter. "I worked with High School Principal Chelsi Hanger and we realized that the

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