

Mossy elementary students create a 'living wax museum' PAGE 7



Mossyrock resident Fran Brandenburg volunteers her expertise in tax prep assistance PAGE 6

Morton/White Pass freshman Layna Sams placed third in the long jump on Thursday afternoon in Randle PAGE 12



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Ric Hallock | East County Journal

The hunt is on

Mineral resident Andrew Dunn, 10, looks up to see plastic eggs running along the fenceline at the Mineral Lake Lions Den campground, site of the annual Easter egg hunt on Sunday, April 5, in Mineral. For a look at this and several other Easter egg hunts hosted across East Lewis County Friday, Saturday and Sunday, see pages 9 and 10 of today's East County Journal.

Mossyrock Schools talk public's role in strategic plan

BY BUDDY ROSE
East County Journal

Mossyrock school board directors discussed efforts underway to revise the school district strategic plan during the regular board meeting on Monday, March 16. The current focus is determining how best to involve the public in the process. Director Shad Hail has been selected as the board spokesperson for the strategic planning process.

Hail reported a letter announcing the planning process has been sent out to the community, utilizing various delivery methods

to as many as possible. He also noted a community survey has also been drafted and reviewed by the board. It will be sent to a sample group for their responses, revised as needed, and then sent out to the entire community. A Spanish-language version is also being prepared.

Hail said a number of parents have volunteered to help in the community involvement effort along with some teachers. So far, all of the parent volunteers are those with children in elementary grades. He expressed the need for additional volunteers who are parents of high school students.

In other board business, elementary Principal Angela Bacon reported the Feb. 26 PTO/parent community dinner at the high school was well-attended, including a number of teachers. Bacon also reported recent test scores show improvement from the beginning of the year but many students are still well behind their grade levels in math and/or English. This applies especially to students in fifth and sixth grades, who were the most affected by the interruption of regular learning due to COVID-19.

Two learning improvement tools she is promoting include

Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP), which works well with English language learners and students in a poverty environment. The other is Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS), which has three tiers of intervention depending on the level of the individual and includes social/emotional/behavioral support.

Junior high/high school Principal Lori Courmyer reported she is working with Educational Service District 113 and Morton UP (United Prevention) Coalition to bring the Strengthening Families Program (SFP) to Mossyrock,

with emphasis to Latino families. It is a seven-week program with weekly two-hour programs focused on communication between students and parents and dealing with current social problems.

She also noted the Seal of Biliteracy in Spanish and English is being offered to high school graduates demonstrating proficiency in both languages. It will appear on their diplomas and is a valuable credential widely recognized by colleges and employers.

Courmyer also noted there are currently many opportunities for

See Mossyrock Page 2

Morton City Council divides up tourism funding for 2026

BY AMBER BROWN
East County Journal

The Morton City Council decided how they would be distributing the tourism funds for the 2026 year at the regularly scheduled meeting on Monday, March 23. After discussion and three proposals brought forward by council members Peter Hansen, Jason Knutson and Jason Sawyer, they came to an agreement and voted.

After the vote, the agreed upon amounts were proposed by Hansen: Loggers' Jubilee would receive \$1,800, Fire Mountain Arts Council would receive \$3,350, Morton Historical Society would receive

\$13,250, Morton City Hall would receive \$5,000 for advertising, \$1,200 would be held in reserve to assist the East Lewis County Chamber of Commerce should they ask for assistance with the town picnic event and \$5,400 would be held in reserve.

The reserve amount would allow another organization to come forward later in the year and toward the end of the year, the council can still bestow any extra funds on one of the organizations that had requested funds.

The audience attending the council

See Morton Page 2

Community choir and orchestra looking to add voices and notes

BY AMBER BROWN
East County Journal

"Music is the universal language of mankind," Henry Wadsworth Longfellow said. Music is something that everyone can enjoy. The creation of music has been brought forth to the community of East Lewis County.

Centralia College East (CCE) has provided a way for the community to come together with its classes of the community orchestra and the community choir for \$35 each. At the end of

each quarter, they have a concert and invite the community to come and see the fruits of their labor. During the summer, CCE puts on a theater performance and the members from the classes are invited to join the performance. In the Summer 2025 performance of "Pirates of Penzance," the members of the orchestra were able to perform music for the play.

The community choir and community orchestra are looking for more people in the community to join each class. "Last quar-

ter we had about 20 people in the orchestra. We really could use about 30 or 40," Randle resident Annette Paolo said. "We could use more percussion, string and woodwind. Whatever you got, bring it on."

Morton resident Jessica Scogin echoed that sentiment, "One ongoing challenge in our area is that each summer, the musical at the Roxy needs to assemble an orchestra for the pit, which can be difficult with limited local musicians.

See Music Page 3



Amber Brown | East County Journal

Carlos Cardenas, owner of Los Lobos Leather, is applying a darker dye to the leather he is preparing at his workshop in Morton on March 4.

Cardenas is self-taught leather crafter

BY AMBER BROWN
East County Journal

Carlos Cardenas owns Los Lobos Leather in Morton, Washington and his work is gaining in popularity. Recently, his work has been featured at Retro Phoenix Mercantile in Mossyrock and Elbe Market Country Store in Elbe.

He began leathercrafting during the COVID pandemic. "I had broken a pair of suspenders, and I could not find anyone who could fix them," Cardenas said. He took the mindset of 'how hard could it be' to fix or create suspenders for himself.

"It took many attempts to be able to create what I wanted," he said. He purchased tools that were needed for working leather and began to experiment. He grew his abilities with belts and hat bands, eventually moving on to more difficult items like purses and dice trays. "I was surprised by how many people want custom gun holsters and chaps," he said.

Much of Cardenas leathercrafting comes from commissioned work. He chooses to work by appointment only. This way he can speak one-on-one with a client, and they

See Leather Page 2