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This edition is for Randy Terashima and the people of Washington County

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Senior Center mortgage paid off!

Weiser community members achieve goal in under eight months

by Philip A. Janquart

They did it. The \$197,000 mortgage balance that was strapping the Weiser Activity Center for Seniors and threatened its very existence is now zero ... zip ... finie.

It's all thanks to generous Weiser community members who dug deep to support the cause. Only eight months into the Evelyn Stover Challenge, donors managed to whittle the balance down to approximately \$42,000.

What turned out to be the last donation came just before Fiddle Week through an anonymous donor who wiped out the remainder, according to WACS board President Karen Hoffer and Treasurer Linda Smith, who both made donations themselves as well as other board members.

"It has all been so exciting and I feel like I've been in a daze; it doesn't seem real to me," Hoffer told the *Signal American* last week.

Smith feels the same.

"I think when we get the title, it will really set in, but it's hard to wrap your head around," she said. "I mean, there were times when I sat in my chair going over things and had to tell Karen, 'I don't know if we are going to have enough to make the payment this month.'"

Part of the senior center's dilemma was the variable interest rate that, at times, spiked to over eight percent. Every month, the bulk of the \$1,771.78 mortgage payment went to interest, meaning the senior center couldn't make any significant ground toward paying down the principle.

It also left little for congregate and home delivery meals, not to mention various repairs that seem to afflict the senior center on a regular basis, such as the \$8,000 air conditioning unit that went out last summer.

In addition, the senior center has been struggling to cover the cost of meals. Through the Area Agency on Aging, federal dollars pay \$4.25 of the cost of each meal. The county chips in \$6,000 annually, which translates into about \$3 per meal, meaning only \$7.25 of the \$12 it costs to provide each meal is covered.

Administrators rely on donations to make up the difference, but there is no way to determine just how much will

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Hannah Moyle doing the heeling, left, moves in for the catch, while header, Rozin Mason, takes a dally to pull the unruly steer around during the youth section of last Thursday's Kathy Skow Memorial Team Roping. A total of 21 local teams will compete in next week's Weiser Valley Roundup finals. The Roundup kicks off on Thursday, July 11, and will run through Saturday night, July 13. See page 11 for the rodeo rundown. Photo by Nancy Grindstaff

Hercules Metals exploration making headway

by Philip A. Janquart

Editor's note: This is the first in a series involving mineral exploration under way north of Cambridge.

CAMBRIDGE – Representatives of Hercules Metals Corp. hosted a townhall meeting on Wednesday, June 26 at the Washington County Fairgrounds exhibit hall in Cambridge.

Over a hundred individuals attended the meeting, which was led by Vice President of Exploration Chris Longton and CEO/Director Chris Paul. Both are geologists. The company is based in Toronto, Ontario, Canada.

The discussion involved details surrounding exploration of land located north

of Cambridge on state land.

Initially, the corporation was targeting silver, but during the exploration process discovered what Longton described as a "mysterious anomaly at depth" following initial exploratory drilling.

"So, last year, we came out and did our maiden drill program and by the time we got to the fifth hole, we decided it was time to find out what this mysterious anomaly was."

Crews used modern geophysical IP (induced polarization) to inject a current into the ground, acting similar to a giant metal detector, up to 3,000 feet beneath the surface.

What they found was something they did not expect.

"We ended up hitting a very long inter-

cept of very high-grade copper and it was a complete, utter, and amazing surprise for us," Paul explained. "That's what sparked all the mania that we saw last fall and all through winter with all the other companies coming in and staking claims and picking up more land."

Since last year, a handful of companies have made over 6,000 claims in the area, 800 of them belonging to Hercules Metals Corp. Claims are still coming, according to Washington County administrators.

Last year, a member of the Weiser Airport board of directors approached the *Signal American* about investigating helicopters, loaded with stakes, arriving at, and departing from, the airport on a daily basis, for

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Annex School holds annual open house for parents, students

by Philip A. Janquart

Annex Charter School held its annual STEAM (science, technology, engineering, art, and mathematics) Camp open house on Thursday, June 27.

Now in its fourth year, the camp gives students the opportunity to show parents the projects they have been working on since the camp began earlier in the month.

It was four weeks of hands-on learning meant to allow kids to apply what they have learned in class during the regular school year and, perhaps, get a jump on what to expect next year.

"What the kids have accomplished shows that they want to learn and explore,

and they had some fun things to do," said Annex sixth and seventh grade teacher and open house coordinator Joe Burris. "We had 25 to 26 students everyday on a consistent basis. By the third week, we have a little dip in enrollment because families go on vacation, but overall, we've been really consistent."

Students are picked up and bused to the school and are fed breakfast and lunch. On Thursday, parents and their kids were treated to free shaved ice provided by Sterling Shaved Ice, owned by Weiser city councilman Sterling Blackwell.

"We had quite a variety of

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Annex Charter School held its fourth annual STEAM Camp open house, which gave students the opportunity to show their parents the projects they worked on during camp this year. From left, Britany Prieta Ramos and Elianna Santana use a special 3-D computer program to learn about a variety of subjects, using a stylus to take them apart and put them back together.

79th Weiser Valley Roundup set to go July 11-13

Local contenders qualify for rodeo go-rounds in barrel racing and team roping

by Nancy Grindstaff

Area cowboys, cowgirls, and rodeo fans from around the valley are all gearing up for three days of rodeo action at the 79th annual Weiser Valley Roundup, July 11, 12, and 13.

For both Idaho Cowboys Association and Pro West Rodeo Association members the current rodeo season started back in late May, with next week's Weiser Valley Roundup on the ICA's list of "prime" rodeos.

Pre-rodeo events will kick off all three nights at 7 p.m., featuring mutton bustin', junior bull riding, novice and pee wee barrel racing, and wild cow milking. Buckles will be awarded to all local events winners.

Each night will be packed with rough stock events, including bareback, saddlebronc, bull riding, and ranch bronc riding. Timed events include tie down roping, steer wrestling, women's barrel racing, breakaway roping, and team roping. Clark Rodeo Ranches is the 2024 stock contractor, and Dustin Christenson is on tap as this year's announcer.

Pre-qualifiers held for two events

In the first annual Weiser Valley Roundup barrel racing qualifier held at the Fred Hust Arena on June 26, barrel racers in three youth age divisions competed for prize money and one of nine open spots to run during the three days of the Roundup pre-rodeo timeslot, all based on the best qualifying times. A few of the barrel racers ended up qualifying for two runs on two different horses.

The event gave young barrel racers and their horses a place to compete, while at the same time limiting the total number

of novice, junior, and pee-wee racers during the WVR show. Three from each age division will run each evening during the 7 p.m. pre-rodeo events, with the main event starting at 8 p.m. nightly.

Pee-wee racers, ages 8 and under, scheduled over the three evenings and their qualifying times are: Ella Logan, 19.226; Brindle Smith, 23.891; Gage Ashbaugh 24.009 and 25.801; Callie Larson, 26.649; Maddie Ingram, 26.763; Dalli Jo Cobb, 34.114; and Teal Cobb, time not available.

Juniors to run, ranging from 9 to 13 years, are: Abigail Layton, 18.694; Lily Briggs, 18.936; Josie Jett Warrick, 19.191; Claire Walker, 19.398 and 20.083; Ella Lacey, 21.244; Coyle Cobb, 22.561; Katie Hordeman, 22.865; and Juliana Hearold, 23.213.

Novice barrel racers range in age from 14 to 18, with the following qualifying for the rodeo: Kinley Post, 18.726; Kylie Branch, 18.732; Hazie Woodland, 18.751; Isabel Sweetwood, 18.768; Jayden Ashbaugh, 18.838; Hailey Zollinger, 19.098; Maddie Rambo, 19.134; Kali Waggoner, 19.164; and Mackenzie Wilson, 19.578.

Action at the arena continued on Thursday, June 27, with the second annual Kathy Skow Memorial Team Roping. The top 12 open teams and top nine youth teams are going on to compete in the finals during the 8 p.m. main rodeo performances each evening. Set up in memory of Cove Creek rancher Skow a year ago, one-third of the cattle fees paid at the event are dedicated to Washington County Fair 4-H and FFA livestock sale add-on monies,



Weiser's Claire Walker will be running barrels both Thursday and Saturday's junior barrel racing during pre-rodeo action at the Weiser Valley Roundup. Walker qualified with two different horses for the events. Photo by Nancy Grindstaff

divided equally among the exhibitors selling project animals at the annual fair in Cambridge.

Youth division teams qualifying to compete in the Roundup, with three teams on each night's local team roping roster, are: Hannah Moyle and McKenzie Sprague; Ty Cobb and Jace Svedin; Hazie Woodland and Rozin Mason; Jace Svedin and Hannah Moyle; Hazie Woodland and Jace Svedin; Camden Svedin and Clay Svedin; Jace Svedin and Rozin

Mason; Hazie Woodland and Hannah Moyle; and Josie Warrick and Rozin Mason. The fast time recorded that night was by Woodland and Mason, with a 9.7-second run.

The 12 open teams, with the headers listed first and four teams competing each night, are: Jerry Cobb and Bryce Svedin; Callie Jo Arriola and Jace Svedin; Rozin Mason and Dally Mason; Rozin Mason and Luke York; Jerry Cobb and Denise Johnson; Maddie Cobb

and Clay Merreck; Ty Mason and Dally Mason; Ty Johnson and Quinn Messersmith; Maddie Cobb and Dally Mason; Jerry Cobb and Quinn Messersmith; Callie Jo Arriola and Quinn Messersmith; and Josie Warrick and Tyler Woodland. The night's best time was recorded by Ty and Dally Mason, with a 12.16-second run.

The 2024 Weiser Valley Roundup promises a great time for all, so be sure to take it all in.

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Hercule owns 800 of over 6,000 mining claims in the county

weeks. It is still not clear for which company or companies the helicopters were operating.

What is clear is that Hercule is the only company to approach the community directly and have open discussions in the form of townhall meetings. The first was held last December.

The reason, in part, is that there is a lot at stake.

Hercule's discovery of copper has even triggered a name change.

"We have historically been Hercules Silver Corp.; we are now Hercules Metals," Longton said. "We changed our name because we are not only looking for silver, but we are also looking for copper as well, and who knows what else is down there. We just hedged our bets to call ourselves 'Metals.'"

The history of mining in the area goes back to 1870.

"They went after high-grade, kind of easy, low hanging fruit; these pockets of high-grade silver all over the place, a 40-mile belt," Paul said. "They got mined out and by about 1920 there wasn't much left. In 1965, an exploration company, which is sort of our predecessor company, came here. They signed an option agreement with a ranch called Nixon Ranch. Basically, the deal was a bunch of cash payments and they committed to doing all kinds of exploration, earning mineral rights that the ranch owned, the right to use the surface to do exploration



Hercules Metals Corp. hosted a townhall meeting on Wednesday, June 26 to discuss exploratory drilling at sites north of Cambridge. The company hopes to develop a silver/copper mine. Above, left, Chris Longton and, right Chris Paul gave a presentation and answered questions from the community. Photo by Philip A. Janquart

drilling."

For about 20 years, between 1965 and 1984, the company drilled about 308 holes, with things really taking off around 1979 or 1980, according to Paul who said the silver prices eventually fell through the floor, ending the company's dreams of building a silver mine.

"It just didn't work because silver crashed to about \$4 and it stayed there for a long time," he said. "It didn't really recover until the late 2000s. By then,

all of the historical operators sort of left. We learned about it in 2020 and essentially picked up the project. We bought the project in 2021 with the idea that ... silver prices were much better. All metal prices have been doing really well lately with all the chaos that's happening in the world, all the inflation. With everything going on, gold and silver has been moving up, so we picked this up for that reason."

Shortly thereafter, while drilling the in-

ital five holes, they discovered the anomaly, which turned out to be copper, which is used heavily in construction, electrical grids, electronic products, transportation equipment, home appliances, and even renewable energy sources.

It is also a key component in producing alloys for different industries and has antimicrobial properties said to be beneficial for health applications.

Be sure to keep a look out for the second part of this ongoing story.