

## City shows off for public works group

### *Much has changed since last state conference*

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By OWEN R. SMITH, East Oregonian

The American Public Works Association annual Oregon chapter convention returned to the Pendleton Convention Center after a four-year absence to discover a city that's been busy with change.

Residents may not notice the change, but many convention attendees, including APWA's Oregon chapter President Peggy Keppler, commented on the improvements Pendleton has made leading up to the Centennial Round-Up.

"It's been a very busy year for Bob (Patterson, Pendleton public works director)," Keppler said. "He knew that coming in having the 100th year and that would be a big draw, very interesting for us to come and see that."

Keppler said nearly 100 delegates from cities as far as Roseburg got a chance to see a wide variety of projects in Pendleton, such as the new parkway on Southwest Court Avenue and roadwork that was completed with federal stimulus dollars.

During a luncheon keynote address, Pendleton Planning Commission Chairman Scott Fairley welcomed the convention to the city, and City Councilman John Boston — also the manager of the Pendleton Woolen Mills — gave a history of his company, highlighting its relationship with the city.

For Patterson, the convention chair, the timing of the week-long event right on the heels of Round-Up has been tricky, to say the least.

"It's one of the busiest years we've got going. We've been pounding, trying to get this to fit in, and do our projects back at the office," said Patterson, who added that he even hosted a tour of his home so delegates could see his solar photovoltaic panels.

Despite the hectic schedule, the conference represented the chance to connect with other public works officials and 39 vendors displaying products as disparate as LED street lighting and a foundry selling manhole covers.

"This is an educational opportunity, too," Patterson said. "We offer eight hours of technical sessions so they can apply that to their professional development hours."

For example, Wednesday featured talks by John Turner, president of Blue Mountain Community College, and Kim Puzey, the Port of Umatilla's general manager.

In addition to the education and networking aspects of the conference, the event also serves as a fundraiser for the chapter's scholastic foundation, which issues about \$16,000 in scholarships to colleges and universities throughout Oregon.

On Tuesday, the conference kicked off with a golf tournament at the Pendleton Country Club and will conclude Friday with a luncheon at 11:30 a.m.

"I gotta admit, we're very tired right now," Patterson said, "but we're just getting started."



John Boston, Pendleton city councilman and general manager of Pendleton Woolen Mills, delivers the keynote address Tuesday at the American Public Works Association convention at the Pendleton Convention Center.