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KICK OFF DISTRICTS
TRACK&FIELD/1B**

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going 106 mph
NATION/7A**

EAST OREGONIAN

THURSDAY, MAY 14, 2015

139th Year, No. 150

WINNER OF THE 2013 ONPA GENERAL EXCELLENCE AWARD

One dollar



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

Stephanie Miller went through Umatilla County Drug Court program eight years ago while battling with an addiction to methamphetamines and other substances. Now she works as a court coordinator for that same drug court.

FINDING A WAY OUT

Drug Court helps defendants recover from addiction

EDITOR'S NOTE: In honor of National Drug Court Month, the East Oregonian is featuring the Umatilla County Drug Court with two stories. The first follows three drug court graduates. A later report will detail this week's graduation and keynote speaker Gordie Bufton, whose drug addiction landed him in a psychiatric ward.

By **KATHY ANEY**
East Oregonian

Tired of seeing the same parade of drug addicts over and over, a group of Florida judges created the nation's first drug court in 1989. Defendants, instead of going into lockup for their crimes, got treatment, counseling and tough love.

The idea spread. Umatilla County's drug court, which started in 2006, is one of almost 500 in the country. Data suggests drug courts reduce criminal activity and save tax payers money, but the biggest gain may be in terms of restored lives.

Meet Stephanie Miller, Amy Madrigal and Craig Rodriguez — three drug court participants who got clean.

Stephanie Miller

One night 11 years ago, Stephanie Miller perched on the Bedford Bridge looking at the Umatilla River below her.



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

Amy Madrigal looks for a Minecraft toy in a heating vent with her grandson, Paul Madrigal, on Tuesday at her home in Pendleton.

"I remember sitting on the rail and wondering whether it would kill me if I jumped," she said.

The 24-year-old drug addict wanted to die, but had no gun. Suicide, she said, seemed the only way to escape her dependence on methamphetamines and other substances.

Today, the mother of three has a master's degree, a job, a new husband and a sunny outlook on life. She credits Umatilla County Drug Court for the transformation.

Miller had started using drugs at parties as a teenager, but stopped using when

See **DRUG/8A**

Criticism mounts against sheriff's office

By **PHIL WRIGHT**
East Oregonian

Hermiston Chief of Police Jason Edmiston waded into uncharted waters Wednesday night — open criticism of another police agency.

His target was the Umatilla County Sheriff's Office, and the bone of contention was his efforts to get a straight answer from the sheriff's office about how it calculates the cost to provide 9-1-1 and dispatch duties.

The issue of dispatch charges came up at the city's budget meeting. About 30 people — city councilors, budget committee members, city staff and a few onlookers — were present at Hermiston City Hall. Councilman John Kirwan asked Edmiston why the city was paying about \$9,000 more for dispatch services than last year, when it merged its dispatch and emergency call center with the sheriff's office communications center in Pendleton. The sheriff's office now handles all 9-1-1 calls in the county along with dispatch services for about 30 agencies.

"Are they gonna smack us with a \$9,000-\$10,000 increase each year?" Kirwan asked.

Edmiston said he did not know, but he prepared a statement on the matter.

"I'm a little nervous, but I'm a little fired up on this," he told the crowd.

Edmiston said he sent emails Feb. 17 and March 16 to the sheriff's office to make formal requests of "the total expected operating cost for the dispatch center and the annual contribution from all entities paying for services (police and fire) including the 9-1-1 monies."

Edmiston said he did not get a response. Emails Feb. 27 and March 10 asking for updates about the requests also went unanswered. He eventually got an estimated bill for dispatch services, but no explanation as to how the county arrived at that amount.

"I am not unhappy with the dispatchers," Edmiston stated. "But I am extremely unhappy with no acknowledgment of the four emails I have sent requesting information."

Those emails are public records, and the *East Oregonian* asked Edmiston and the sheriff's office to hand them over. Edmiston did. The sheriff's office is considering the request.

In an April 21 email to county undersheriff Jim Littlefield, Edmiston mentioned the lack

See **DISPATCH/8A**

HERMISTON

City puts focus on code enforcement

By **JADE MCDOWELL**
East Oregonian

Hermiston's free recycling event in April marked

an increased focus on code enforcement for the city.

Stepping up those efforts was one of the top goals for the city council in 2015. Parks and Recreation director Larry Fetter said that will start with education.

"A lot of people just don't know what the law is," he said.

Currently the city only has one part-time code enforcement officer, Mike Marcum. He dealt with 1,221 violations in 2014. The biggest complaint he addressed was parking issues, but top priorities included weeds, junk, abandoned vehicles, yard sale signs and trees and shrubbery complaints.

Fetter told the city council Monday that with such limited resources it made

sense to get other departments on board instead of leaving code enforcement to the police department. Citizen complaints could still come through the police, he said, but it might make more sense for public works to address a tree blocking a stop sign or for the parks department to pitch in on weed abatement.

"These code enforcement issues relate to so many departments ... it's not just a police activity," he said.

The city held a free recycling event on April 25, where more than 60 tons of materials were hauled away for recycling and reuse. That included 25 tons of tires and 1,275 gallons of paint that will be taken to a factory for

See **CODE/8A**



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

Snowy blues

Fresh snow caps the foothills of the Blue Mountains east of Pendleton on Wednesday after a cold front brought rain and mountain snow to the region.

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