

# Free fishing trip for cops draws ethics question

By PHIL WRIGHT  
East Oregonian

Four members of the Umatilla County Sheriff's Office were treated to a free four-day salmon fishing trip in September, courtesy of a pro-police organization.

Other local police questioned if the trip could be considered a gratuity, and while the trip doesn't appear to conflict with state law, they noted that perception is highly important.

Dion Hess, of Ridgefield, Washington, created "Kings for Cops" to honor law enforcement with a four-day trip the weekend of Sept. 10 that included fishing for salmon on the Columbia River out of Woodland, Washington, according to a statement from the Umatilla County Sheriff's Office. Woodland and Ridgefield community members, police associations and private businesses funded the trip to cover the cost of hotels, restaurants and more. Professional fishing guides also donated their time, boats and equipment for the trip. KGW News in Portland covered the event.

Umatilla County sheriff's deputies Rick Carter and Mike Gallaher went, as did his brother Tim Gallaher, retired from Oregon State Police, along with sheriff's

detectives Kacey Ward and Erik Palmer.

Hess put together the event after gunmen in July targeted police in Dallas, Texas, and Baton Rouge, Louisiana, injuring a total of eight officers and killing 12. Hess invited more than 100 police, according to the sheriff's statement, and the local group joined several officers from the Pacific Northwest and the police departments of Dallas and Baton Rouge.

Sheriff Terry Rowan said the deputies who went were off-duty and drove their own vehicles, and he didn't consider the trip a gratuity. He didn't specify how he came to that decision.

Pendleton Police Chief Stuart Roberts also received the invitation, but said in an email he did not pass the invitation to his staff.

"Albeit I think the gesture is/was generous and well-intended," Roberts stated, "I do not think it passes the public perception test that law enforcement seems to be struggling with right now."

Public employees, including police, can receive gifts due to their positions, according to state statute 244.040, which covers government ethics. Employees have to determine if the gift is free of influence and how much the gift is

worth, and they cannot accept gifts worth more than \$50 in a year from a source that has a legislative or administrative interest.

A police sergeant in charge of purchasing body armor for a department, for example, could violate the law if he received a gift of more than \$50 from a body armor vendor. Nothing indicates the fishing trip came with those kinds of strings.

Roberts said Oregon laws are "pretty complex" when it comes to evaluating whether something is a gift or honorarium. Thus as a matter of practice, his department does not consider invitations.

"The most basic mechanism of evaluation," Roberts said, "that is drilled into my staff is ... if something is offered to you that is not offered to the general public because of your position/job as a public employee, you/we should not consider it."

Roberts said answering that question is simpler and cleaner than scrolling through the law to find exceptions.

"There is no gift or honoraria," he said, "worth a sanction and/or your job."

Hermiston Police Chief Jason Edmiston said he had not heard of the trip at the time, but he would have called the Oregon Government Ethics Commission to get a reading

on whether attending would have been appropriate.

Edmiston said he is "super sensitive" to even the appearance of gratuity and dealt with that situation a few weeks ago.

The Chuckwagon Cafe, Hermiston, toward the end of September donated 35 \$15 gift certificates to the Hermiston Police Department. Edmiston wrote a letter thanking the business for its generosity, but also explained why the department could not accept the certificates.

"Inasmuch as your kind act may not directly represent a gift, I as the agency head must make the determination if it rises to the level of a gift," Edmiston wrote. "Unfortunately, I believe it would be a slippery slope for me to accept and disseminate the certificates to our folks."

Edmiston said he returned the letter with the certificates. Restaurant owner Cathy Stolz and her staff offered another suggestion on what police could do with the gifts — have officers give them to people for doing good deeds.

Even how to handle that, Edmiston said, required a staff meeting because police must have a legal reason to stop someone. Police can follow good Samaritans until they park somewhere and then hand them a certificate.

PENDLETON

## Wildhorse CEO joins school board

East Oregonian

From a deep field of attorneys, educators and other high-level professionals, the Pendleton School Board selected Wildhorse Resort & Casino CEO Gary George to take the place of departed board member Bob Rosselle.

According to a Pendleton School District press release, George beat out nine other candidates for the position.

"Gary strengthens our board's breadth of talent and background, bringing additional expertise and diverse experiences that we know will help us positively impact the education of all of our Pendleton students," board Chairwoman Debbie McBee said in a statement.

George's addition means the board now has a member of the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation in a district where 12.6 percent of the students are American Indian.

"I am excited to get started and be involved with Pendleton School District," George said in a

statement. "I look forward to developing partnerships, improving education and making Pendleton the place to be."

Before taking the helm at Wildhorse, George worked as a senior growth management planner for Washington's Snohomish County, a U.S. Census Bureau supervisor and the executive director of the CTUIR. George



George

has a bachelor's degree in urban and regional planning from Eastern Washington University and also is a member of Oregon Gaming Alliance, the Oregon Native American Business, Entrepreneurial Network, and an ex-officio member of the Pendleton Chamber of Commerce.

George has already shepherded two children through the Pendleton school system and has another child attending Pendleton High School.

The person who is selected will have to run for a four-year term in the May 16 election to continue beyond June 30, 2017, when his term ends.

HERMISTON

## Business owner receives certification

East Oregonian

Danita Smith, of Third Day Creations, LLC, Hermiston, recently earned the certification administered by Promotional Products Association International.

Individuals with the certification are considered industry leaders who have attained a higher standard of professional competence, knowledge and experience. Those attaining the

status have completed a combination of required classes, demonstrated years of employment in the industry, education, industry contributions and a successful demonstration of expertise.

Third Day Creations specializes in promotional products and business gifts. For more information, contact 541-564-9219, thirdday97838@gmail.com or visit www.thirddaycreations.net.

PENDLETON

## EOCI delays inmates for outside work crews

By PHIL WRIGHT  
East Oregonian

Eastern Oregon Correctional Institution halted plans for its own inmates to work outside the fence.

The medium-security prison in Pendleton aimed to have the crews in the community by Oct. 24. But EOCI superintendent Jeri Taylor in a written statement Friday announced that changed.

"This was a difficult decision and one that I do not take lightly," she stated. "Trying to identify enough offenders that meet the eligibility requirements has proven to be a bigger challenge than we originally planned."

EOCI houses about 1,700 inmates, according to Oregon Department of Corrections statistics, and prison spokesperson Jackie Peck said there are about 200 in minimum custody, but only 45 of those could possibly qualify for inmate work crews.

Criminal past and the security level are major factors in qualifying for a

work crew, but Peck said there are other considerations as well, including an inmate's behavior in the prison and if the person is under a medical restriction, such as for a bad back.

Minimum custody inmates also qualify for other programs in Oregon prisons, she said, such as fire crews. And the corrections department moves minimum

custody inmates nearing their release date to prisons with minimum security facilities, such as Two Rivers Correctional Institution, Umatilla.

Peck said inmate crews from TRCI will continue to operate in the Pendleton community. Two Rivers has about 120 inmates in its minimum custody facility, according to the state, and Peck said the prison there

designated 30 inmates for crews.

The Pendleton City Council in May voted to end the 29-year-old agreement with the state that banned inmates working outside the prison. Peck said it may not ever be possible for EOCI to have inmates work in the community.

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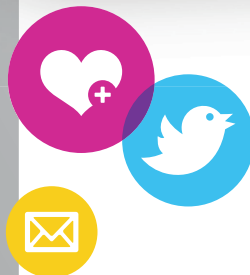
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