

# Weekend

**FRIDAY-SUNDAY • September 13-15, 2019 • \$1.50**

Good day to our valued subscriber Vi Vanderpool of La Grande

LA GRANDE

## LIFE EXPERIENCE DRIVES DIRECTOR TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE

■ Unexpected loss of brother pushes Jamie Landa to into social work and to executive director position



Sabrina Thompson/The Observer

Jamie Landa now serves as the executive director for the Shelter From the Storm, a safe, free and confidential place for people who have experienced domestic violence, sexual assault or stalking. Landa is excited to help make a difference in people's lives with her work.

By Sabrina Thompson, The Observer

*July 29 was Jamie Landa's first day as Shelter From the Storm's new executive director. Combining her background in finance and her drive and desire to help people, Landa hopes to make a difference in the lives of those affected by domestic abuse and sexual assault.*

"For a very long time my career has been in finance," Landa said. "I had a family tragedy — I lost my brother. He's a veteran, and he took his own life. It, I guess, pushed me into social work."

Before accepting this position at Shelter From the Storm, Landa worked in Alaska as a bookkeeper and finance manager, and though she enjoyed her work she wanted to do more and help more people, she said. She and her husband moved to Cove in 2014, where she worked as the bookkeeper in the repair shop they owned. In 2015, Landa's brother passed away, and that fall she signed up for courses at EOU to get a degree in social welfare. Before graduating in 2017, Landa had secured a job

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— Jamie Landa, Shelter From the Storm executive director

at the Department of Human Services in its Adults and People with Disabilities department.

Landa felt that her work at DHS wasn't utilizing all of her skills and that she wasn't able to help people the way she wanted. She applied as soon as the position of executive director at SFS opened up, six months ago when the previous executive director, Mindy Mowery, left.

"I don't have a lot of history (in social work), but it is my passion," Landa said about her motivation behind seeking the position. "I

want to help people who are going through tough times. Even if it's helping by maintaining grants and keeping the doors open, I want to do that. If us being here, and me facilitating that, helps people get the help they need, it makes me feel good."

As executive director, Landa is responsible for making sure grant conditions are being correctly followed and in charge of budgeting. She functions as a liaison between the board and the advocates who work at SFS and is in charge of the daily running and manage-

ment of the staff.

"In the short time I have been here, I have seen success stories," Landa said. "You get goose bumps and you get tears in your eyes, and you're like, 'We really are making a difference.'"

SFS is an advocacy center for people who have experienced domestic violence, sexual assault and stalking. All of the services SFS provides are free and confidential. Some of these services include providing a safe house or shelter from an abuser, and a sexual assault response room, where a survivor can go to be seen by a sexual assault nurse rather than go to the hospital. Advocates support clients as they go through legal processes and help them get

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## Police consider motive in murder

■ Details of case against Ronald Lee included at hearing

By Sabrina Thompson  
 The Observer

On Nov. 17, 2018, around 1:40 a.m., Loretta Williams was shot and killed in her Cove home. In February, her soon-to-be ex-husband, Ronald D. Lee, was arrested in connection with her death and charged with murder



Lee

and conspiracy to commit murder. During an Aug. 27 plea hearing, the State of Oregon presented evidence supporting why Lee should continue to be held in the Union County Jail without bail. The information made public at the hearing included details about the case against Lee.

According to Union County Sheriff's Office Det. Jason McKaig's investigation and testimony, Williams and Lee separated in April of 2018, and Williams filed for divorce on July 18, 2018. According to court records, she filed for divorce due to "incouncilable differences between parties caused by irremediable breakdown of marriage."

Lee moved out of their Cove home and into a camp trailer outside of his shop on Highway 82, according to McKaig. During this time the couple argued over ownership of the home, McKaig said. Williams filed for and was temporarily granted a restraining order that required Lee to stay at least 150 feet away from the house and from her. According to court documents, she was granted exclusive use of the home. The restraining order was eventually dismissed, but it was incorporated into the civil divorce case, according to McKaig.

During McKaig's investigation, he found that Lee had hired an associate, Deva Williams (no relation to Loretta), to drive him around for \$30 per hour due to Lee having

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## Crash claims life of child

■ Three-vehicle accident on Highway 82 in Minam Canyon sends three to hospital

By Dick Mason  
 The Observer

A three-vehicle crash in Minam Canyon late Wednesday morning resulted in the death of a child and seriously injured another. One adult was also injured in the accident.

The accident occurred at 10:30 a.m. when an east-bound Ford F-150 pickup

on Highway 82 driven by Christy Erickson, 31, of La Grande, who had two child passengers, left its lane while negotiating a curve. The pickup then sideswiped an oncoming Subaru Outback, which had two occupants, driver Mary Importico, 31, and a passenger, Ryan Importico, 32, both of Portland,

according to an Oregon State Police news release.

The collision caused the Ford F-150 to continue to the left and into the oncoming lane where it struck, almost head-on, a Dodge Ram pickup pulling a trailer. The Dodge Ram had four occupants: driver Colby Rimmer, 25, and passengers Daniel Rimmer, 53, Michael Cramer, 41, and John Kraus, 38, all of

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Oregon State Police photo

A three-vehicle crash on Highway 82 in Minam Canyon late Wednesday morning ended in the death of a child and seriously injured another. One adult was also injured in the accident. Highway 82 was closed for five hours following the accident.

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### WEATHER Full forecast on the back of B section

**Friday** 50 LOW Partly cloudy  
**Saturday** 80/48 Partly sunny  
**Sunday** 76/48 A shower or two

### CONTACT US

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 Issue 109  
 3 sections, 20 pages  
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