

NURSE

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A welcome approach

Hancock said she strives to be receptive to questions regardless of the circumstances.

“I’ve always been willing to answer questions in any situation,” she said. “I try to create a culture that is open, inviting and welcoming.”

Hancock said that when teaching her less experienced colleagues she uses the same approach for all of them before determining what type of learner they are.

“I follow a common path until I see how they learn,” she said, noting that some are hands-on learners while others are visual learners.

Hancock has been a health care provider for 22 years overall. She was a certified nursing assistant the first 11 years of her career before entering the Oregon Health and Science University School of Nursing, La Grande, more than a decade ago. Hancock said that if not for a substantial scholarship she received from the Ford Family Foundation she might not have been able to attend nursing school.

“That scholarship meant so much to me,” she said.

Hancock graduated in 2011 and since then has worked at Grande Ronde Hospital, aiming throughout to uplift her patients.

“Nobody wants to be there,” she said. “They are going through a difficult time in their lives. I want to ease their anxiety and stress.”

Filling the gap

Humphry wrote in the nomination letter that she is impressed with Hancock’s professionalism and heartfelt concern for her patients.

“She consistently upholds care standards and has an amazing amount of compassion for her patients,” Humphry said.

Hancock said that working as a nurse during the COVID-19 pandemic has been a stressful experience. One reason is that those infected often cannot have visitors, so she and other nurses are striving to reach out to these patients to reduce their feelings of loneliness.

“We are trying to bridge the gap,” she said.

Hancock is the only nurse preceptor from Eastern Oregon to make the Oregon Center for Nursing’s top-10 list. She, in the eyes of Humphry, is a role model like few others.

“Sarah is committed to helping others succeed,” Humphry said. “She is the definition of an excellent nurse preceptor.”

FOOD BANKS

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January level of 151, according to food bank board member Tom Sutton.

“The numbers are down. My gut feeling tells me — what I hear — is that they got more food stamps than what they normally get,” Sutton said of the food bank’s typical clients, “and they’re getting paid unemployment better than what they’re making by going to work, so I don’t think they need the food bank.”

The nonprofit Community Connection of Northeast Oregon Inc. services the Grant County Food Bank, along with food banks in Baker, Union and Wallowa counties. Community Connection’s numbers have risen slightly since the previous year.

“When you look at all the modes of service that we do, the food boxes and the produce distribution sites and all of that, we’ve served 15% more people in 2021 compared to the prior fiscal year,” said Margaret Davidson, executive director of Community Connection.

Demand wavers during different times over the year, according to Audrey Smith, the food bank manager for Community Connection. Smith noted this usually happens from September through February, depending on the weather.

“The demand for food boxes across our service area



Pallets of food sit within the Community Connection of Northeast Oregon storage facility in Island City on Thursday, Nov. 4, 2021. Alex Wittwer/EO Media Group



Alex Wittwer/EO Media Group
Suzanne Osterloh, a forklift driver, loads up a rented U-Haul truck with food from Community Connection of Northeast Oregon at its Island City warehouse on Thursday, Nov. 4, 2021. The delivery is destined for food banks in Baker and Grant counties.

has gone down steadily since December of 2020,” Smith stated. “However, we had a slight increase in the need for food boxes in the month of September, but it’s important to know that food is still available

for people who need it.” Those wishing to make a donation should note the food banks aren’t limited to just food donations — personal care items and household staples also go a long way.

“We could always use paper products — toilet paper, paper towels — household basics,” Killion said. “We never have enough. Our shelves are completely empty all the time no matter how much we donate, and that’s across the board. I would say that at any food pantry that you go to, people would be so happy to get laundry detergent and personal care products and things like that.”

All the region’s food banks indicated they’re appreciative of the donations that are coming in.

“We are so grateful for all the community support we receive, and anyone who has interest in supporting the pantry. Your money isn’t going to waste,” Killion said. “Your resources are not going into a pile. They’re definitely being used.”

BUILDING

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of the move to begin negotiations with Mackenzie.

“We have a long way to go, but this will get the ball rolling,” Bowen said.

Mackenzie would be responsible for developing a conceptual design for a public safety center that would house the Union County Sheriff’s Office, the La Grande Police Department, the Union County Jail and Union County Parole and Probation, Union County Emergency Services and perhaps other agencies, according to the sheriff.

Bowen told the commissioners he would also like the building to have a stabilization room where people experiencing mental health issues could be helped. This would allow them to be taken somewhere other than Union County Jail or the emergency room at Grande Ronde Hospital.

Mackenzie would be required to include input from people with local criminal justice entities on their needs before creating architectural plans. The company would also be asked to make a cost estimate for the structure it creates a design for and recommend a site for it.

If a public safety building comes to fruition, it might replace Union County’s

current law enforcement building, which was built in 1979. The structure — which houses the Union County Sheriff’s Office, La Grande Police Department, Union County Jail, La Grande Police Department Dispatch Center, and Union County Emergency Operations Center — is too small to accommodate all the services it provides, Bowen said.

“We have outgrown it,” the sheriff said.

The Union County Jail is particularly in need of additional space. He said that the situation is so bad that sometimes the jail has to release people in the middle of the night to make room for new inmates.

The jail has 38 beds, and Bowen said 80 beds are needed.

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