

Susan Wagner/Contributed Photo

**Sam Morgan, of Enterprise, is recovering in Seattle after a fall outside his home that resulted in several broken vertebrae in his back on Jan. 12, 2022.**

**FALL**

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the bank, though still up to his chest in water.

When he was delayed returning home, his son, Samuel Drake Morgan, went to check on him. He heard his father yelling, and eventually found him in the creek. He was located at around 12:30 p.m., Wagner said. “He jumped over the bank to get Sam out, but he couldn’t,” Wagner said. “They called the ambulance, it came, (and) it took them six guys to get him out of Trout Creek.”

According to Wagner, Morgan’s temperature had dropped to 81 degrees. He had three broken vertebrae in his upper back, one or two in his lower back, and three cracked ribs.

He was originally taken by medical helicopter to St. Alphonsus in Boise, Idaho, for surgery, but ran into a snag there.

Due to the hospital being overrun with COVID-19 patients, “they didn’t have room for him in recovery,” Wagner said.

Morgan was transferred to Harborview Medical Center in Seattle and, after a 24-hour wait, had a 10-hour surgery, according to Wagner. She

said he was to be transferred to a rehabilitation center near Harborview.

The family believes there have been several miracles in recent days that have led to Morgan being in the place he is.

“God provided so many miracles, and we already know that,” she said. “Him not being paralyzed, him living to begin with. ... We just recognize the blessing that God has given us all along. And Sam does, too.”

Wagner said she has spoken with her brother since the surgery, and described him as being “in good spirits, but it’s hurting him.”

She also said he has been conveying a message of love to many people who have been on his mind in the days since his fall.

“Sam would say he really loves everybody, and thanks everybody for their prayers,” Wagner said. “He just wants to let everyone know. He thinks about a lot of these people he knows. That’s what he’s been telling me all along — call this person and let me know I love them. He wants to let other people know God’s with them. ... And what a miracle it is that he is alive and not paralyzed in any way.”

# BMCC fighting declining enrollment

By **ERICK PETERSON**  
East Oregonian

HERMISTON — Blue Mountain Community College has changed a great deal, according to school administrators. Its students are adjusting, too.

Eric Hoyos, 18, of Umatilla, is one of those students who has had to make difficult adjustments. In his last two years of studies at Umatilla High School, he had to grow accustomed to online studies. When the pandemic closed his school, his in-person classes switched to online ones.

“I feel kind of odd talking to a screen,” he said.

This being the case, he struggled with working online with teachers, which led to a drop in his grades. His usual A and B grades fell, and he had difficulty maintaining a 3.0 GPA, he said.

In time, however, he got used to his online classes,

and he was able to move on to studies at BMCC, his current school. Hoyos has completed two terms at the college, and is doing well, he said. He has even taken a hybrid class, in which he studied online and in person, and he felt good about it, he said.

Hoyos said he wants to become a nurse because he has seen a need for people in health care. When his mother became sick with COVID-19 and was hospitalized, he witnessed firsthand the importance of nurses. He said he will complete studies to accomplish his goal, even if he must do all his courses online.

Hoyo’s example is typical, said Nayeli Contreras, director of Blue Mountain’s Hermiston center. Like Hoyos, many other students are getting used to studying online, she said.

“Since COVID forced everyone to go online, (students) have become much

more comfortable with taking classes online,” Contreras said.

**Fighting the trend**

BMCC President Mark Browning said enrollment at the college is down 5%, year to year, and getting students to return to classes is one of the big challenges.

The school recently held sessions in which administrators have heard from students, past and present, about their attendance. The meetings included students who dropped out or changed their academic plans due to the coronavirus pandemic. “There is a lot of uncertainty,” he said.

The student body is conflicted, he said, with some students wanting in-person classes and others preferring distance learning. He said he has heard from students who are concerned about COVID-19 exposure and others who need attention they can only get from face-

to-face instruction.

Many other students, Browning said, are expressing they do not know what to do and are fearful of committing to academic programs. Rather, they are sitting out school until they can develop their career intentions.

“Traditionally in years past, especially in community colleges, we’ve been able to serve that role in which students can explore different career options,” he said. “And we still serve that, but it’s different under COVID.”

Browning explained the pandemic has made students unsure of what they want to do with their lives. But the community college president also stated there are other reasons why enrollment at the school is down — namely, the economy. Right now, he said, the economy is good, and this is something that typically lowers college enrollment.

## PARALEGALS

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forms. Union County court facilitator Teala Sunderman said she assists people with filling out forms related to self-represented cases, but she is unable to give specific legal advice, and her office is busy.

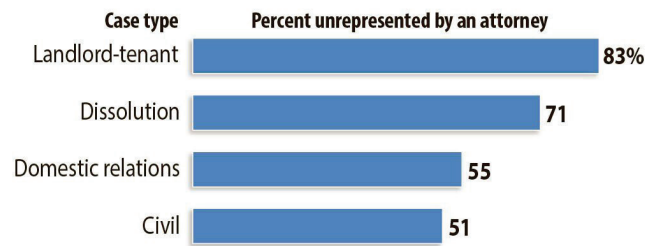
“I think especially in urban areas it’s probably close to unmanageable,” she said. “I am able to still provide good contact. I’m able to answer most questions, and get back to people in a reasonable amount of time. So I think we do OK here.”

Senior Judge Dan Harris is vice chair of the bar’s Paraprofessional Licensing Implementation Committee. He said paralegals can cover a gap in the legal system but they are not going to serve as attorneys.

“Divorce cases, for example, a lot of these people are going to have to go into court and ask the judge for a specific release,” he said. “The paralegals can help them fill out the forms and file the forms correctly, but they can’t appear with them in court. So at some point, it’ll have to be handed off to an attorney

## Unrepresented cases in Oregon, 2016-21

The Oregon State Bar is working to add a new level of paralegal staff capable of assisting residents with landlord-tenant and family law cases.



Source: Oregon Judicial Department

The Bulletin graphic

to handle that part of it.”

**In demand**

According to a survey Portland State University conducted in 2019, more than 84% of Oregonians with a civil legal problem did not receive legal help of any kind. The same survey found 84.2% of people who needed a lawyer were unable to obtain one.

Similarly, Oregon Judicial Department case count data shows between 2016 and 2021, more than 83% of all parties in landlord/tenant cases had no attorney. In dissolution cases 71% were unrepresented. In other domestic relations cases 55% were unrepresented.

“The biggest benefit will be in the area of family law because that’s where the greatest

demand is,” Harris said. “Right now, we have so many people coming to the courthouse who are just doing their very best to try and fill out these forms correctly, and it just puts a huge burden on the courthouse staff to reject a form and tell them to go back and do it right.”

The responses the bar has received on the proposal through its public comment portal indicate the general consensus aligns with the PSU survey data. A number of residents support the proposition and cite the high-cost barrier of entry to legal matters as a principal cause.

The responses of those who identified as lawyers, however, were a mixed bag.

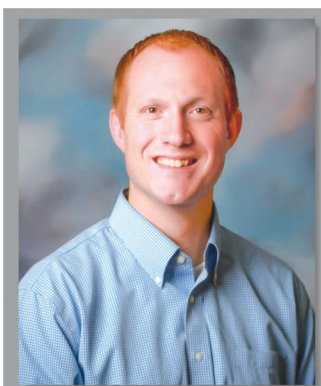
Although nearly all of the respondents acknowl-

edged the dearth of services for lower-income residents seeking legal aid, some expressed concern that licensed paralegals acting as a lawyer would be akin to a nurse practitioner performing surgery. Others took exception with the paltry experience required to become a licensed paralegal.

Landlords took issue with the program due to concerns it would further imbalance landlord-tenant relationships and empower bad tenants to seek legal redress against law-abiding landlords. The proposal specifically cited instances where landlords could use a licensed paralegal’s services in filing notices of eviction, though the document noted this mostly would apply to landlords with a smaller portfolio of real estate assets.

Harris said making this move requires something of a kind of a leap of faith.

“There’s a huge demand for this kind of service, and based upon what we’ve seen in other states, we’re anticipating that a sizable number of qualified paralegals will want to step up and start to help out in these areas of the law,” he said. “But, you know, we really don’t know until we launch it and see how it works.”



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