

HRV grad headed to Stanford on full ride

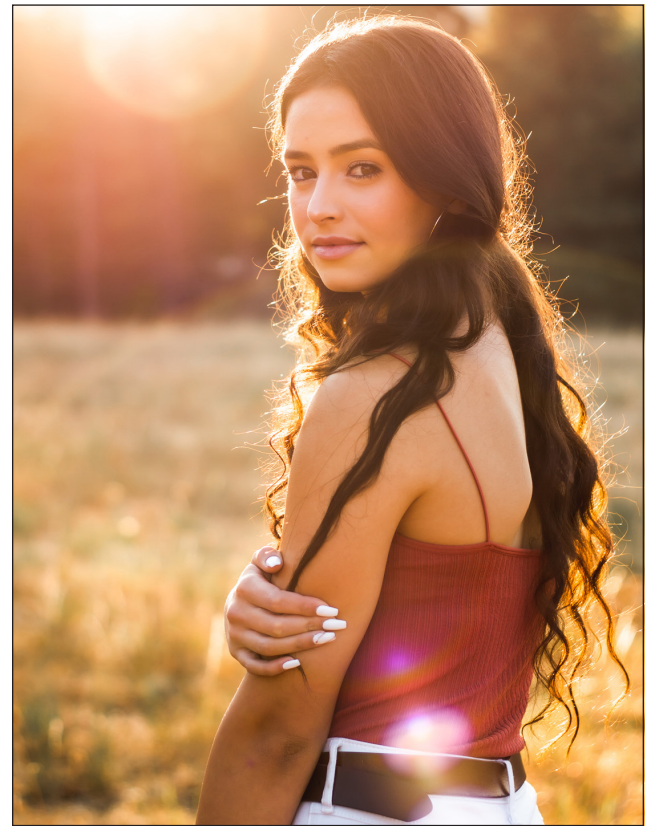
By Trisha Walker
Columbia Gorge News

WHEN RECENT Hood River Valley High School graduate Dora Plascencia-Macias applied to Stanford University, she thought of it as a “reach school” — that is, one that would be a stretch to attend. But that’s where she’s headed this fall. “Stanford has always been my dream school,” she said. “I grew up with the idea that I was going to college and I was willing to give it my all to get to one of the best schools. I applied listing it in my brain as a ‘reach’ school. I never thought I would get accepted.” Stanford was the last to release their decisions, so when she received her acceptance letter, she was sorting through other offers — and learned Stanford had offered her a full scholarship. “Stanford covered everything besides \$5,000, which was covered by local scholarships,” she said. “Without

shame, I can say that I bawled when I saw my financial aid letter; I couldn’t believe the amazing offer they were giving me. Somehow, Stanford was my cheapest option ... I’m extremely grateful for their generosity that has allowed me to attend my dream school without having a financial burden.” Plascencia-Macias, who lives in Odell, plans to major in political science to prepare for law school. “[Stanford is] not only one of the most selective universities, but they truly care about making a change in the world,” she said. “... I’m excited to attend Stanford because they have some of the most inspiring professors in both law and psychology fields. They also push their students to explore their interests and seek for what they’re truly passionate about, so I might find another way to help people through my studies. My ultimate goal is to reach a point in my life where my actions help thousands of people. Pursuing a career in law will help me find justice for those who are

failed by our system.” At Hood River Valley High, Plascencia-Macias was involved in leadership classes, serving as ASB president for the 2020-21 school year as well as school board student liaison. She also volunteered with the local woman’s shelter, which she credits as a reason she is passionate about law, and is part of the Oregon Department of Education (ODE) Latinx/o/a Advisory Group, advocating for the Latino community. “HRV always motivated me to challenge my barriers, and I did,” Plascencia-Macias said. “There is always a mentor awaiting your arrival, but you have to be willing to learn. I gathered my strength through the assistance that I received, but also through the challenges I had to face on my own.” “It’s hard being a minority in Hood River and our school system has been a part of that struggle. I recognize that our administration is working towards change, but there is a long way to go,” she said. “I know that I have been

prepared for both the educational and life challenges that I will encounter in college due to all the mentors I have gathered throughout the years and the struggles I have overcome.” As for Stanford, Plascencia-Macias knows she got to this point by working hard to fulfill her dream. “I’d like to remind everyone that life is hard and things get in the way of accomplishing your dreams, but you should never give anything minimum effort,” she said. “Sometimes it seems like blowing something off won’t impact the result, but every step of the way leads to the final product.” “This opportunity is years in the making,” she said. “There were multiple occasions where I felt like not trying because it wasn’t going to get me where I wanted to be, but now I get to attend my dream school. I didn’t get here because of good luck, I got here with years of work.”

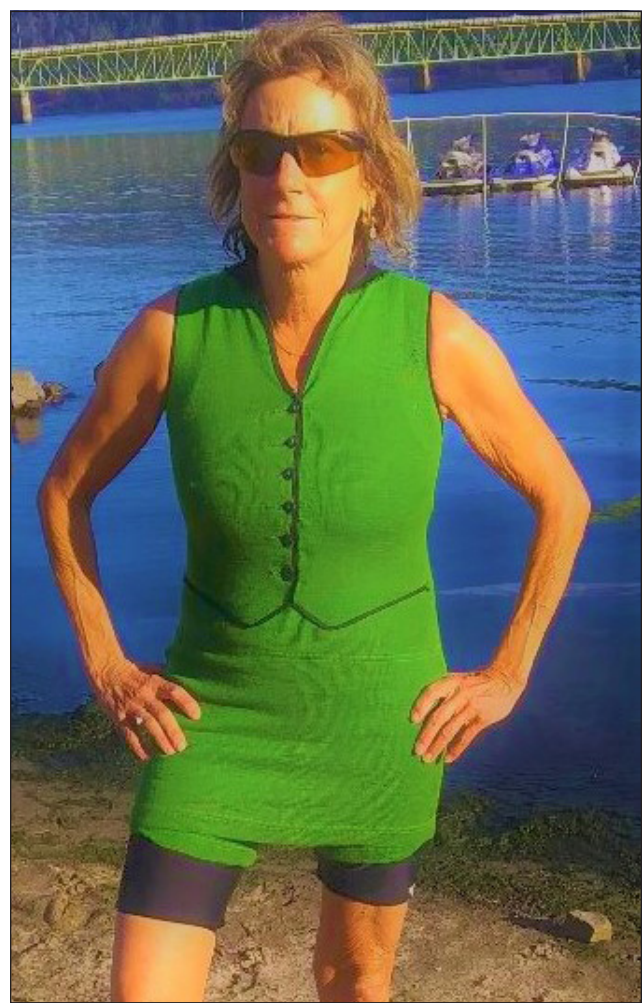


Dora Plascencia-Macias, who graduated from Hood River Valley High School earlier this month, will attend Stanford University in the fall. She plans to major in political science and eventually become a lawyer. Contributed photo

Historic swimsuit reveals challenges of past

By Yvonne Pepin-Wakefield
For Columbia Gorge News

The woolen swimsuit gifted to me came with history, a personal challenge and a lesson in cold water swimming. Could this over a century old garment hold up during a swim from The Best Western Plus beach to the red buoy below the Hood River Bridge and back? I’d done this before in a wet suit and was curious to experience what early open water swimmers experienced wearing one-piece wool suits. Will the six black buttons pop off? When soaked will it stretch out and drag me to the depths? The green swim suit with black piping was previously owned by Mercedes Foley. Born in 1892, she was an athletic mother of five. Before her children came, it could be assumed Mercedes wore the suit as a young bride who swam at Foley Lake Ranch, the present-day site of Foley Lakes, West of The Dalles.



A swim across the Columbia River in a restored wool swimsuit from the early 1900s inspires thoughts of past swimmers — and hypothermia. Contributed photo

The suit was given to Mercedes, an Irishwoman with red hair, by her husband Pat, who had a fixation for green. They were married in 1916. After Mercedes’ death in 1977, the suit was among other garments that came into the possession of her granddaughter, Annette Byers, who gave it to me. When I first tried it on, the suit fit more like a form fitting cocktail dress and itched. A hand-sewn label in the neck reads THIS GARMENT 100% VIRGINIA WOOL. At the initial fitting, enough moth holes were discovered to question whether the suit would fray apart in the water. Bev Tuttle of The Dalles volunteered her darning skills before the first test swim in a salt water, heated indoor pool. Predicting the fabric would stretch proved opposite. After several laps, the skirt had shrunk considerably, yet was still comfortable and very warm. These same insulating properties were not experienced months later during a September swim, supported

by a safety paddler, in the 58-degree Columbia River. Even though I wore Lycra bike shorts underneath, the frigid water penetrated the fabric like a sponge, getting heavier as I swam. The harder I swam, the harder it was to breathe. As an open water swimmer and safety paddler for other swimmers, I recognized the signs of Swimming Induced Pulmonary Edema, or SIPE, a condition that causes sudden breathlessness during open water swimming. I’d experienced this once before while wearing a full wet suit and so knew it was time to get to shore and to get warm fast. Dr. Jodi Ready, also a long-distance open water swimmer, has admitted watersport enthusiasts to the

hospital emergency department in repository distress. “The presenting symptoms of SIPE are shortness of breath beyond what you expect and coughing. More likely, it will happen in water cooler than 60 degrees and exercise in these conditions only adds pressure. SIPE can be disconcerting and scary,” she said. Back on beach, the green knit clung tightly to my shivering body and I could see more moth holes than before the swim. Later, hand-washed in Woolite, Mercedes’ dried suit was wrapped in moth-proofing cedar blocks and folded into a tight drawer. It’s doubtful I will take it for a swim again. It’s more certain that, after a full darning, it will suit me better as a cocktail dress.

Proposed grant would survey public access roads

Wildfire mitigation, evacuation routes explored

By Mark Gibson
Columbia Gorge News

Rural fire districts in Wasco County have identified access roads in and out of public lands as a “significant hindrance” to fire mitigation efforts and wildfire preparedness because they are outside the county road system, and the board on Wednesday agreed to support a grant proposal that would create an inventory of those roads to aid fire mitigation and evacuation efforts. According to the letter of support, “This is a critical strategy for reducing risk of wildfire, as it provides multiple departments and organizations key information to address hazardous conditions and opportunities for mitigation.” “This is both to identify

mitigation projects, and also identify hazards for ingress and egress for emergency service professionals and identify evacuation routes,” said Kelly Howsley-Glover, long range planner for Wasco County. Once the inventory was complete, staff could then assess the inventory to identify and prioritize mitigation projects in the county, she said. The proposed FEMA grant of \$175,000 would support a three year project. “We intend this to be a collaborative effort on the part of planning, public works and surveyor, and emergency management,” she said. “With fire seasons becoming longer and more devastating, we need all available tools to help our partners mitigate the risk and impacts of wildfire.” Wasco county has about 270 miles of public access roads, according to an estimate by Public Works Director Arthur Smith.

Areas of particular concern include the Pine Grove and Mosier areas, Howsley-Glover said. The surveyor crew will use their drone capabilities, or possible a vehicle mounted camera, in making the assessment, she said. “It gives us two sets of low-level data to make the assessments,” she said. “Our planning team has been working hard on this,” said Commissioner Steve Kramer, who said he fully supported the request. Letters of support for the grant were also provided by area fire agencies, emergency planners and the Oregon Department of Forestry, Howsley-Glover told the board. The letter of intent will be submitted to the Oregon Department of Emergency Management, and if they like the proposal they will then be asked to submit the full grant.

Regional economic sessions continue

Mid-Columbia Economic Development District (MCEDD) is hosting public sessions to update the region’s Economic Development Strategy for the Columbia River Gorge. MCEDD leads this process every five years to guide economic development for Hood River, Wasco, and Sherman counties in Oregon and Klickitat and Skamania counties in Washington. The next meeting will be held on June 30 from 8:30-10:30 a.m. This session will focus on an analysis of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats facing the region. The process began in March, with meetings occurring monthly via Zoom. Participants from across the region have gathered to discuss COVID-19 impacts

on the local economy, changing demographics and economic trends, and how to improve the resilience of key industries in the Gorge. Information gathered at the monthly events will be pulled together with data and research to develop the final plan, the Mid-Columbia Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy for 2022-2027. MCEDD coordinates implementation of the regional strategy in partnership with local stakeholders. In total, there will be seven sessions to develop a draft plan, with a specific focus on equitable economic

outcomes and resilience. To view past sessions or register for future ones, visit <http://www.mcedd.org/strategy/get-involved>. MCEDD has been developing and implementing a regional economic development strategy since its formation in 1969 to promote the creation of family-wage jobs, the diversification of the economic base, and the growth, development and retention of business and industry within the five-county district. Contact Jane Allen with questions at jane@mcedd.org.

GORGE LOCAL

Our Home, Our Lifestyle
Independent Living | Assisted Living
Memory Support | Respite Care

FlagStone
SENIOR LIVING

3325 COLUMBIA VIEW DRIVE, THE DALLES
541-298-5656 | FLAGSTONESENIORLIVING.COM

A&E Heating and Air, Inc.
Your Friends IN THE BRIGHT RED VANS

Expert Service & Reliability

- Maintenance programs
- Licensed and Bonded
- Over 20 years Experience
- Factory trained technicians

Quality Sales & Installation

- Furnaces
- Air Conditioning
- Heat Pumps
- Ductless Mini-Splits and much more!

For a limited time only get up to 72 months no interest or 6 months no payments or interest with approved credit on your purchase of a new Heat Pump, AH, or Furnace.

Serving the Columbia River Gorge Since 1997
NEW LOCATION IN THE DALLES!