

GORGE LOCAL – IN BUSINESS

Pistil enjoys success with Hood River storefront, new Portland pop-up shop

■ **By Alana Lackner**
Columbia Gorge News

Some people might say that opening a storefront in the middle of the COVID-19 pandemic is crazy. Pete Hixson, one of the owners of Pistil Designs in Hood River, is not one of those people.

Pistil, a brand known for their hats and other accessories, has been around for nearly 20 years, Hixson said. Up until recently, it was always wholesale, selling to other retailers. It was also just hats, which was a point of interest to retailers.

"We just knew that no one treated hats like a brand," Hixson said. "They were just an accessory, an afterthought by (bigger brands). We just thought that someone could treat the hats special and create a brand around that."

While doing wholesale, Pistil always worked out of a warehouse. It wasn't until November 2020 that they decided to open an official store.

Hixson said selling directly to customers has been invaluable in terms of learning more about what people want.

"It's great for us to actually watch and see how (products) are sold in store," he said. "We actually have true data points."

The store has been a success, despite opening during the pandemic, Hixson said. They've seen more and more increased traffic, especially

on the weekends and as the summer progresses. He said it's been great to be more present in the community.

"We're proud of our roots and we wanted to kind of showcase that we're a Hood River brand," he said.

Though their roots will always be in Hood River, Hixson said they've been looking at places for other storefronts. In fact, they recently opened a pop-up shop on Northeast Alberta Street in Portland. It will be there for at least until the end of summer, and they'll see whether they want to continue that, based on its success.

Hixson said it may become a consistent thing throughout the summer, but they may also look into pop-up stores in other cities across the country.

"We sell a lot of product in New England and on the east coast. I think there's some places there that could probably do well with a Pistil store," he said. "Or maybe in Colorado somewhere."

Hixson said nothing is for certain, but everything is on the table. They've also been expanding their online sales business. In general, he believes the business is in a position with a lot of potential.

"We don't know exactly what we're doing next," he said. "But having your own store and your own website makes it easier to try things out."



Pistil Designs was originally founded in Hood River and managed in a warehouse but now has an official storefront in town, located at 316 Oak St., as well as a pop-up shop on North Alberta Street in Portland. Pictured below is Pete Hixson. Alana Lackner photos



'Bandit Biker' visits Columbia Gorge Community College

■ **By Alana Lackner**
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Columbia Gorge Community College was recently visited by the bike-riding Bandit, but don't worry, nothing was stolen. The bike-riding Bandit, Fernando Rojas-Galván, is no thief. In fact, his mission is to give back.

Rojas-Galván is a professor at Clatsop Community College, where their mascot is Bandit the raccoon. As part of a fundraiser to raise money for students' textbooks, he is currently riding 1,600 miles around the state of Oregon, visiting all 17 of the state's community colleges.

At each college, Rojas-Galván meets with college representatives to discuss textbook affordability. At CGCC, he met with CGCC President Marta Yera Cronin, Vice President of Instruction Jarett Gilbert, Vice President of Student Services Gerardo Cifuentes, Executive Director of Institutional Advancement Dan Spatz, and Digital Access and Public Services Librarian Tori Stanek.



(Left to right) Gerardo Cifuentes, Jarett Gilbert, Fernando Rojas-Galván and Tori Stanek pose at the lunch held at Columbia Gorge Community College to celebrate Rojas-Galván's arrival. Alana Lackner Photo

Rojas-Galván said that, as a teacher and educator of almost 25 years, his experience helps keep him motivated on his ride.

"I've got I don't know how many stories of students and

names that I think of," he said.

Rojas-Galván's journey started on July 5 in Seaside, Ore., and is set to end in Astoria on July 25. Those interested in his ride across

the state can follow along or donate to the fundraiser at www.clatsopcc.edu/event/bandit-biking-for-books.

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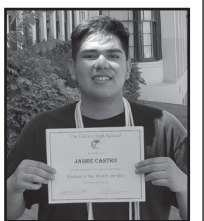
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Dr. Cullen's Student of the week

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Jaimie Castro, TDHS

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Rep. Corry appointed to pandemic review task force

Rep. Chris Corry, assistant ranking member on the House Appropriations Committee, will serve on the Task Force for After-Action Review of Statewide Pandemic Response and Recovery, after appointed to the committee by House Speaker Laurie Jinkins.

The task force, which consists of 38 members, includes four legislators from both caucuses in the Senate and the House. The committee is charged with completing a comprehensive review of Washington state's COVID-19 pandemic response in accordance with national

standards for emergency disasters.

"I'm honored to have been selected for this committee. The pandemic brought unprecedented uncertainty to our families, businesses, and communities," said Corry, R-Yakima. "As we carefully examine the state's response to the crisis, we need to find the lessons within it. What did we do right and what did we do wrong? Are there gaps and needs within the healthcare system and other emergency response functions?"

Funding for the task force was allocated in the 2021-22 state operating budget.



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