

PENDLETON

Violent crime down, thefts tick up in 2014

By PHIL WRIGHT
East Oregonian

Violent assaults dropped in Pendleton from 2013 to 2014, but property crime, especially auto thefts, trended up.

Pendleton police Chief Stuart Roberts released the city's annual crime statistics earlier this week. Aggravated assault plunged from 27 cases to 9, a 67 percent drop and the largest decrease among eight categories of serious crime

the city collects for participation in the FBI's Uniform Crime Reporting Program, which collects statistics from law enforcement. Roberts said one reason behind the steep fall may be the referral of all domestic assault cases to the Umatilla County District Attorney's Office in 2014.

District Attorney Dan Primum assigned a single deputy prosecutor to handle those cases, which Roberts said resulted in more prison sentences and treatment. "With-

out significant consequences, domestic abusers tend to escalate from simple assault to aggravated assault," said Roberts.

Roberts also said Pendleton's nine cases were below the national averages of 13-41 for cities with populations of 10,000 to 24,999.

The tumble in aggravated assaults also contributed to total violent crime in Pendleton dropping from 47 incidents to 31.

Pendleton, though, experi-

enced small increases in robbery (12 cases to 13), and larceny/theft (673 cases to 683), but auto thefts took off with a 25 percent hike (42 cases in 2013 to 56 last year). Roberts said in most cases the victim knew the suspect, and almost 10 percent of cases involved drive-offs or failure to return test drives or rental cars.

"All too many of these cases are the result of keys being left in the vehicle or not needing a key to start," he said.

Pendleton falls within national averages of 49-80 auto thefts a year, and Roberts reported eight of the robberies in 2014 were the result of combative shoplifters.

Rape investigation also went up, from seven in 2013 to nine in 2014, but Roberts said the rise is likely due to the FBI expanding its reporting criteria of the crime. There were no homicides in 2013 or 2014, and one case of arson in each year.

Pendleton police also re-

sponded to 44,706 calls for service in 2014, a 35 percent leap from 2013. Roberts attributed the rise to the department switching to a new records management system May 21, 2014. The new system is more comprehensive, he said, and easier to search to gather data.

Roberts cautioned the data may not reflect the true picture of criminal activity in Pendleton, but he stated Pendleton is a safe place to live.

Rock slide blocks road to Hells Canyon Dam

A 60-foot rock slide is blocking the only road to Hells Canyon Dam about three miles north of Hells Canyon National Recreation Area on the Oregon-Idaho border.

No one was injured in the slide, which happened Wednesday. The road could be closed for a week while crews with Idaho Power work to clear boulders, repair the road surface and protect against the threat of additional slides.

Cattlemen's Workshop boasts national speakers

LA GRANDE — Guest speakers from across the country will discuss challenges facing ranchers during the 11th annual Cattlemen's Workshop Saturday at the Blue Mountain Conference Center in La Grande.

The all-day conference will feature presentations on climate change, representing agricultural interests in Washington, D.C., and new methods for sustainability in the beef cattle industry. Admission is free, and lunch is provided by event sponsors.

Tim DelCurto, professor and program head at



Photo contributed by Idaho Power
A rock slide blocked the only road to Hells Canyon Dam on Wednesday in northeastern Oregon, and the road could be closed up to a week.

Oregon State University's Eastern Oregon Agricultural Research Center in Union, said the workshop was started in 2004 to address concerns surrounding mad cow disease in North America. About 100 people attended that first gathering, and the workshop now regularly draws between 400-500 people.

"This has been wildly successful," DelCurto said. "It's quite a diverse group. They're very innovative, and very bright."

Presentations will run from 9 a.m. to 4:15 p.m. Local vendors will also be on hand during a trade show held at the conference center. For more information, contact DelCurto or Kim McKague at 541-562-5129.

BRIEFLY

Flu cancels M-F council meeting

MILTON-FREEWATER — Flu season spares no one, including the Milton-Freewater city government.

The Milton-Freewater City Council had to cancel its Jan. 12 meeting after City Manager Linda Hall began running a 103 degree fever as the result of the flu, forcing her to miss her first council meeting in 22 years.

"I was really, really, really sick," she said.

In addition to Hall being set to present most of the agenda items, she said two other councilors were coming down with the flu while Mayor Lewis Key was out of town.

The city rescheduled their meeting for Monday, when they will decide who will take the vacated seat of former city councilman Sam Hopkins-Hubbard.

The three finalists are Frank Millar, retired crop consultant for Wilbur-Ellis Co.; Steven Patten, senior environmental scientist for the Walla Walla Basin Watershed Council; and Verl Pressnall, the former maintenance director for the now-defunct Ferndale and Umapine school districts and the president of the East End Rod and Gun Club.

All three candidates were interviewed at the Dec. 8 meeting.

The meeting will be held

at the Albee Room at the Milton-Freewater Public Library at 7 p.m.

Robotics team nets 3D printer

Umatilla School District has received a third three-dimensional printer after robotics students on an all-girls team took the initiative to write another grant.

Eighth graders Lauryn Journot and Anna Lougee of Clara Brownell Middle School wrote the grant that secured a \$1,200 EKOCYCLE cube printer from the company.

A 3D printer uses computer designs to create physical parts out of hard plastic. The robotics teams use it to create custom parts for their robots or replicate ones they don't have time to order more of online.

Team mentor Tammy Fisher said having a second CBMS team win an EKOCYCLE grant shows how ingenuity and teamwork from some students can lead to success for all students.

"These young women are leading the way for female students in STEM and making a big impact on their school and community," she said.

The other students on the team are Carisa Rodriguez, Jasmine Cardenas, Marlene Jimenez-Diaz, Stephanie Ramirez and Jazzmine Rippy.

PILOT ROCK

Richman to stay on as part-time chief

Search begins for replacement

By PHIL WRIGHT
East Oregonian

Pilot Rock's outgoing police chief has agreed to stay on part-time as the city searches for a new police officer and chief.

Darren Richman has led the small city's three-officer force since May 2008. He said he is ready for a new venture and plans to start a garage door installation business. His last day as chief is Jan. 30.

Richman and the city council Friday struck a deal for him to work no more than 16 hours per week at \$40 per hour without benefits while the city seeks his replacement. Pilot Rock Mayor Virginia Carnes said Richman will handle administrative duties, such as scheduling, but will not respond to calls for service.

The city council also agreed to a deal Friday with former Milton-Freewater police chief Gary David to conduct the search for Richman's successor. David brought Richman to Pilot Rock, Carnes said, and that proved to be a good hire. She said the city would re-

imburse David for mileage and expenses but would not pay him a fee for services.

Carnes also said she wanted to spread the word that the city plans to honor Richman with a retirement party Saturday, Jan. 31, from 1-3 p.m. at the city council chambers.

Pilot Rock is also hiring a new police officer to eventually replace Greg Stallings, who returned to the force Wednesday on a part-time basis. City recorder Teri Porter said applications already are coming in for position, and she considered that an encouraging sign. Carnes said the city would prefer to hire an officer that has graduated from the Oregon Public Safety Academy, Salem, otherwise the city would have to pay a new hire while he or she completes the 16-week basic police training.

According to the Oregon Department of Public Safety Standards and Training, the next available course begins June 15.

Contact Phil Wright at pwright@eastoregonian.com or 541-966-0833.

New hearing set for cop-killer

By SCOTTA CALLISTER
Blue Mountain Eagle

SALEM — Sidney Dean Porter, who killed a John Day police officer nearly 23 years ago, will get a new shot at freedom next week in a hearing before members of the Oregon Board of Parole.

Grant County District Attorney Jim Carpenter said he will travel to Salem to testify at the Jan. 27 hearing, and he has already submitted a package of materials about the crime to the board.

"I will ask them not to release him," Carpenter said, noting he will underscore the depravity of the crime.

"The facts of the crime are unrefuted by anyone, except Porter himself," he said.

Porter, now 55, was sentenced in 1992 for the bludgeoning death of Officer Frank Ward, who had gone to Porter's home on a domestic assault call.

This is the second time Porter has come up for release. The board ordered his release in 2012, after a hearing missed by then-DA Ryan Joslin.

The decision to release a convicted killer of a police officer, coming with no local law enforcement input, sparked protests across the state from police officials and prompted a legislative committee hearing. The board reopened the hearing in 2013, this time deferring Porter's release until at least June 2015.

Next week's hearing will set the stage for release or up to two more years of incarceration.

The hearing will be held at the Oregon State Correctional Institution in Salem, with public attendance only by prior arrangement with the Corrections Department.

Described as an exit interview, the hearing allows the board to review psychological or psychiatric evaluations, discuss the offender's conduct in prison, and examine his parole plan.

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