

# Company wants to save air tankers

Outdated aircraft were used by USFS until 2011

By **GEORGE PAVLEN**  
East Oregonian

A California-based company is asking the public to help save six large, maneuverable air tankers and return them to fighting wildfires across the West.

The Lockheed P-3 Orion, originally developed for anti-submarine warfare, was used for aerial firefighting by the U.S. Forest Service through Aero Union Corporation, of Sacramento, California, which provided the tankers under exclusive-use contracts.

In 2011, the Forest Service canceled its contract with Aero Union following a dispute over safety and maintenance practices. The company soon went out of business, and the tankers were later purchased by United Aeronautical, a spare parts and manufacturing facility.

One of Aero Union's former pilots, Dale Head, came across the old P-3 fleet at a firefighting conference last April and decided to buy the planes back before they were dismantled. He formed his own company, Orion Aerial Firefighters, and launched an Indiegogo crowd funding campaign to bridge the financial gap until they can secure private investment. Enter Indiegogo, a website that al-



The P-3 Orion air tanker was used for fighting wildfires until the U.S. Forest Service canceled its contract with Aero Union in 2011.

lows individuals to make small contributions to a project or cause. Head said the P-3 campaign is meant support the purchase and repairs of the P-3s. According to the campaign web page, Orion has raised just \$4,299 of its \$4.95 million goal.

Jennifer Jones, a USFS spokeswoman for the National Interagency Fire Center in Boise, said their focus now is modernizing the fleet with planes that can meet certain criteria for speed, power and capacity for carrying fire retardant.

These "next-generation" tankers, compared to the older "legacy" tankers, are crucial to ensure firefighters can safely and effectively battle large blazes, Jones said.

"We're in a situation now where we have hazardous fuel buildup, we have climate change, we have long-term drought ... We want to make sure we have an effective capability to respond," Jones said.

Contact George Pavlen at [gplaven@eastoregonian.com](mailto:gplaven@eastoregonian.com) or 541-564-4547.

# Umatilla County backs Pendleton drone range

East Oregonian

Umatilla County Board of Commissioners gave its support to the city of Pendleton for developing an unmanned aerial system test range.

Board chairman Bill Elfering said he and commissioners Larry Givens and George Murdock approved the supporting resolution Thursday morning. He said the board did that because Pendleton is in a unique position as the only

place and entity investing in the remote-controlled aircraft. If a large store, for example, was deciding to locate in one city or another in the county, he said the board could not pass this kind of support.

The board, though, did not attach dollars to the resolution, but Elfering said that is a possibility in the future. The county receives about \$300,000 a year from the state lottery for economic development and the 2015-16 county budget could have

about a third of that available for job creation.

The county considers projects on a case-by-case basis for economic benefits, he said, such as increasing the property tax rolls. The drone base at the airport in Pendleton does not have direct effect on the county, but if a manufacturer moved in that would lead to jobs and people needing housing and the county would see a boost that way.

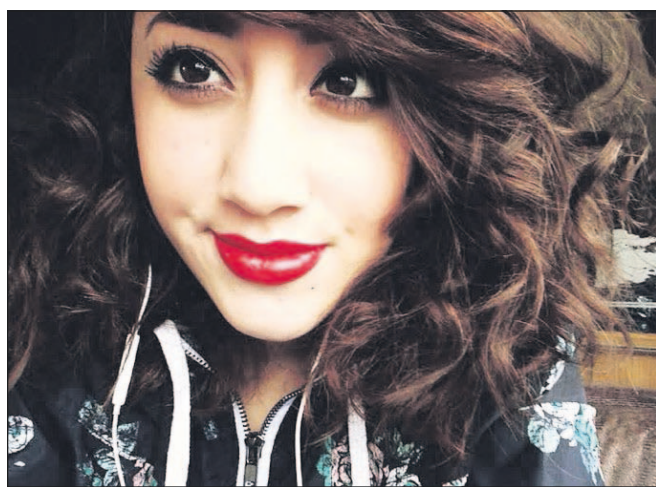
Elfering said he and Murdock toured the project

at separate times and while now it is in the testing phase the site has the potential for manufacturing and real job growth.

"That's what I really would hope it develops into," he said, akin to what the Cessna Aircraft Company has done in Wichita, Kansas.

The board during its administrative meeting also approved a policy to send text messages to county employees in the event of an emergency, including for bad weather.

## HERMISTON



Naomi Aguilar

# High school student wins songwriting contest

East Oregonian

Hermiston High School senior Naomi Aguilar will have the chance to professionally record her own song after winning second place in Eastern Oregon University's high school songwriting contest.

Her song "Bygones," about high school heartbreak, impressed the EOU judges enough to award her second place out of 35 entries from high school students across the eastern half of the state.

"This song is about heartbreak and how to move on and not let it overcome and drag you down," Aguilar said in a news release.

"Many girls around my age helplessly fall in 'love.' Although they believe it will last, it sadly doesn't, leaving

them heartbroken until they fall in love once again."

She said she started writing songs her freshman year of high school but has become more serious about the craft lately. She said she wanted to thank Hermiston High School music teacher Joshua Rist for encouraging her.

As one of four contest winners, Aguilar will get a cash prize and the opportunity to record her song professionally at EOU. She will also perform with the university's music department when they take their show on the road with a Feb. 10 concert at Hermiston High School.

Aguilar's winning entry can be listened to online at [eou.edu/music/songwriting-contest-winners](http://eou.edu/music/songwriting-contest-winners).

## HERMISTON

# Student selected for Washington, D.C. trip

East Oregonian

Madilyn Hofbauer will act as a student representative for the Umatilla Electric Cooperative in Washington, D.C., this summer.

Hofbauer, a junior at Hermiston High School, was selected to represent the cooperative at this year's Youth Tour hosted by the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association on June 11-18.

While at the nation's capitol Hofbauer will have a chance to speak with Oregon's state representatives, learn about electric cooperatives, listen to motivational speakers and tour national landmarks including the Smithsonian and the Vietnam war memorial.

Hofbauer holds a 3.9



Madilyn Hofbauer

GPA, is involved in speech and debate, sings in the high school's chamber choir, is on the Star Dust Varsity Dance Team and is the founder and president of a local book club. She is the daughter of John and Misty Hofbauer.

## SUBMIT COMMUNITY NEWS

Submit information to: [community@eastoregonian.com](mailto:community@eastoregonian.com) or drop off to the attention of **Tammy Malgesini at 333 E. Main St., Hermiston** or **Renee Struthers at 211 S.E. Byers Ave., Pendleton**. Call 541-564-4539 or 541-966-0818 with questions.

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## PENDLETON

# Fight over toilet leaves questions

East Oregonian

and medics arrived.

Pendleton police are investigating a fight Wednesday night that started over the use of a toilet. Pendleton police Chief Stuart Roberts said officers still are trying to suss out just what happened.

Michael Slover and Jacob Gornick are residents of 344 S.E. Third St., Pendleton, Roberts said, where multiple people live and share a common toilet. Slover did not like how Gornick left said toilet. At around 8:10 p.m. the two argued and Slover shoved Gornick, Roberts said. Gornick said he was going to tell his father, who also lives in Pendleton.

The father, Thomas Gornick, showed up about 15 minutes later, Roberts said, stormed into the home and argued with Slover. That escalated to punches and at one point the two men crashed into a window. Thomas Gornick left the scene and Pendleton police

Slover had injuries consistent with a fight, including a 1/2-inch gash on his forehead, Roberts said. Medics treated him at the scene. Roberts also said Slover could not recall who threw the first punch or otherwise started the fight.

Roberts said police also want to hear Thomas Gornick's side in all this. He lives on the Umatilla Indian Reservation near Pendleton, the chief said, and tribal police are trying to contact him at Pendleton's request.

Roberts said Gornick could face charges of trespassing and burglary, which means someone entered a place to commit a crime, in this case assault. But Roberts cautioned that none of that is certain and if police decide there is not a clear reason to make an arrest the department may refer the case instead to the Umatilla County District Attorney's Office to consider charges.

## HERMISTON

# Free immigration presentation Saturday

East Oregonian

Three attorneys from the Tri-Cities will provide free information about immigration law at Hermiston High School on Saturday.

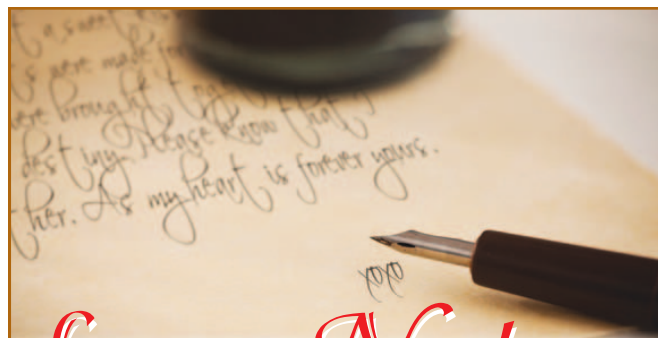
Thomas Roach, Eammon Roach and Alva Guizar of Roach Law in Pasco will give a presentation at 6 p.m. on the pros and cons of deferred action programs for undocumented immigrants and who can apply.

The presentation is sponsored by Hermiston's Seventh-day Adventist church and will be held mostly in Spanish.

Deferred action pro-

grams refer to a number of executive actions taken by President Barack Obama to address immigration. The president has said that certain groups of undocumented immigrants, such as those brought to the country at a young age, can continue to work in the United States without being deported if they pay taxes and pass a criminal background check.

The event was originally advertised as taking place at Hermiston Junior Academy but has been moved to the Hermiston High School auditorium. For more information call Maria Durón at 541-720-3387.



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