

CROSS: Mendoza hoped to strengthen others’ faith

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again this year.
He moved to Hermiston from Mexico when he was 11, and works for the fertilizer company Two Rivers Terminal. He said he plans to start school at Blue Mountain Community College this summer and study criminal justice.

Mendoza said he was raised Catholic, but thought church was boring until he got involved in the youth group at Our Lady of Angels, which helped him develop a much greater appreciation for his religion.

He hoped to similarly strengthen others’ faith on Friday.

“I hope people think about what he (Jesus) did and who he was,” Mendoza said.

Mary

Friday was Yessenia Garcia-Sanchez’s first time playing the Virgin Mary in the Way of the Cross pageant, but she played Mary in two other plays in the past.

The Umatilla High School sophomore said she believed the role of Mary in the pageant was second in importance only to the role of Jesus, because nothing could show the suffering of Jesus’ followers as much as a mother watching her son die.

“I like showing what Mary does,” Garcia-Sanchez said. “She’s the mother of God, seeing her own son beaten up and about to be killed. That’s pretty important.”

At the fourth station of the cross on Friday she knelt at the feet of Jesus, weeping, before the Roman soldiers pulled her away and pushed her into the crowd of onlookers.

It was a serious role for the teenager, who grew up in Hermiston and Umatilla and wants to become a pediatrician. She said her mother would be in the crowd but her little brothers, ages 9 and 4, didn’t want to come and watch because they thought they would be scared by the violence portrayed.

To spiritually prepare for their roles, the participants were asked to pray and



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

A crown watches as actors perform the Way of the Cross pageant at Butte Park on Friday in Hermiston.

fast from food all morning. Garcia-Sanchez has been Catholic her whole life, and said she has enjoyed getting to participate in the Good Friday celebration the last couple of years.

“It helps my faith,” she said. “I’ve known these stories for so long, and being part of them and participating is so cool.”

Roman Soldiers

As Garcia-Sanchez and the “weeping women” braided each others’ hair in the church office building upstairs, in the basement teenage boys and men from the church donned armor and togas.

As the soldiers donned their costumes, a few discussed whether to wear socks under their sandals, protecting their feet from the cold and from the scratchy weeds they would have to climb through on the butte.

Like the main characters in the pageant, however, they decided that some physical discomfort was part of the job.

“It’s a sacrifice,” someone said. Mario Contreras was portraying a Roman soldier for the second time in

his life, after watching similar pageants as a child growing up in Mexico. For Contreras, it was an opportunity to carry on a family tradition.

“I grew up Catholic,” he said. “All my parents, all my grandparents, all my family have been Catholic.”

He moved to Hermiston 15 years ago and works in construction. He and his wife have a daughter, 6, and son, 5, with another child on the way.

They were planning to watch Contreras that afternoon, and he said he was looking forward to the conversations that the play sparked with his children in time for Easter.

As all of the actors stood on the butte at the end of the afternoon and joined the crowd in a final prayer, pageant director Vincente Trevino urged everyone to come to Mass that night even though they were tired from the long walk.

“Let’s not let it end here,” he said. “... He gave it all for us and we need to give it all for him.”

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EOTEC: About 358 staff hours per year spent on budgeting

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unlike the barns project, there is no guarantee that we will receive any bids, that the EOTEC Board will accept any of the bids received, or that the bidders will agree to the deadline,” Drier wrote. “EOTEC should also assume that any contractor submitting a bid will increase its price if they have incomplete design documents and/or an unrealistic construction timeline.”

He wrote that the schedule assumes the board receives complete, biddable design documents for approval no later than April 22 and “we urge the board and community not to assume that the construction schedule can be compressed to make up for further delay in completing and approving the design.”

Drier said that he wanted to clarify that Frew Development does not set a full construction schedule, but merely gives contractors a deadline by which all work must be done.

He said he felt confident that including a July 21 deadline in the bid documents for

the barns was reasonable, and that EOTEC would receive bids from contractors agreeing to the timeline with no extra cost.

Additional tasks, including construction of bathrooms, food booths and other amenities, posed “no significant challenges” in being completed on time, Drier said.

On Friday the EOTEC board also discussed adding a part-time financial position with the cost split evenly between EOTEC and the city of Hermiston.

Currently the city is handling EOTEC’s financials for free, but city finance director Amy Palmer said as activity on the project has ramped up, the task has become overwhelming and made it difficult for her to complete needed tasks for the city.

“If something isn’t done, I don’t know if I can continue,” she said.

She estimated approximately 358 staff hours per year were spent on budgeting and accounting tasks for EOTEC and 60 hours on recorder

duties for a combined cost of about \$23,500 in salary.

The EOTEC board voted to approve up to \$12,000 a year toward a part-time position to take over those duties, if the Hermiston City Council is also willing to approve the same amount. The position would be overseen by the city. Board member Kim Puzey, who also serves as executive director of the Port of Umatilla, said he would approach the port commission about chipping in some money as well since some of the money for EOTEC from the state legislature is passing through the port’s coffers.

Nate Rivera of the EOTEC fundraising committee reported to the board that the committee was about \$175,000 short of its goal to raise \$2 million by April 1 and money was still coming in.

He said a little less than \$1 million of that was pledged money that would be covered by a loan upfront, and the committee would have a finance agreement to present within the next month. He also said the committee

had received significant interest from parties such as tool-rental businesses about in-kind donations and they were working to come up with a plan to efficiently use those offers.

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HOMICIDE: Officers saw Simpson toss a gun into thick brush

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life. His funeral was Friday morning.

Victor Joseph Contreras, 23, of California, is in a Portland jail on federal charges of attempted murder and more for shooting Welch, but not for shooting Jimenez. Contreras claimed there was a second shooter, according to an FBI affidavit, and investigators found 27 bullet casings at the scene.

Simpson and Welch are enrolled members of the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, according to tribal communications director Chuck Sams.

Lewiston police Lt. Joedy Mundell in a written statement Wednesday reported FBI agents and tribal police “who were working an active investigation” had information of a “possible wanted person” in Lewiston.

That wanted person was Simpson.

City police officers worked with tribal police and the FBI to conduct

surveillance on a residence and vehicles there, the statement said. Police followed a 2005 Ford Taurus from the home, and as the car pulled into a Burger King parking lot officers spotted Simpson.

Police tried to contact him, but he bolted. The foot chase ended soon after when officers caught Simpson in the back yard of a nearby home.

Officers also saw Simpson toss a gun into thick brush, according to the statement. After an extensive search, police found the gun.

Nez Perce County prosecutor Justin Coleman said Simpson served a prison sentence in 2012 for a felony drug crime and then was on probation, but he was wanted for violating that probation. Simpson has a hearing Wednesday in state court on that matter. Coleman said he has not seen any paperwork to extradite Simpson.

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HERMISTON

McDonald’s remodel to close Highway 395 lanes Tuesday

East Oregonian

Traffic will be disrupted at Eastern Oregon’s busiest intersection next week as a remodeling project closes lanes at the intersection of Elm Avenue and Highway 395.

Richard Duncan Construction announced that it will be working in various rights of way around the intersection for the next month as it remodels the McDonald’s restaurant there.

On Tuesday night starting

at 7 p.m. the northbound lanes of Highway 395 will be closed until morning as contractors tie in to a water line. There will be flaggers in place to wave cars through.

The Oregon Department of Transportation will also be continuing work on the Jennie Avenue intersection with Highway 395. Its work on Monday and Tuesday is not expected to close any lanes of travel, but on Thursday and Friday one lane of the highway in each direction will be closed during the night.

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