



**BUCKS
WIN WITH
ANOTHER
SHUTOUT**
SOFTBALL/1B

WEEKEND EDITION



**MEET
YOUR
MEAT**
LIFESTYLES/1G



**STUDENTS INTRODUCED
TO FFA'S FACETS** REGION/3A

EAST OREGONIAN

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WINNER OF THE 2015 ONPA GENERAL EXCELLENCE AWARD

\$1.50

Distracted

to death

Mother on a quest to end epidemic of distracted driving

By PHIL WRIGHT
East Oregonian

Alexyss Therwhanger was 18 when she got her first tattoo: "I love you, Mom."

Her mother, Shannon Moulton, a tattoo enthusiast, said she replied in ink as well with "I love you more."

Alexyss the afternoon of Feb. 19 left a friend's place in Long Creek, a small town in remote Grant County, and headed north on Highway 395 in a 1998 Buick Century to return to Hermiston. She lived in Hermiston most of her life and was staying there again. South of Pilot Rock she drifted into the other lane and crashed head-on into a Lincoln Continental.

The two occupants of that car were injured. Alexyss died. She was 19.

See DISTRACTED/14A



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

Shannon Moulton of Richland holds a photo of her daughter, Alexyss, as traffic passes by on Highway 395 in Pendleton. Moulton lost her daughter after she collided with a vehicle while driving on Highway 395 and using her smartphone last February south of Pendleton.

HERMISTON

City pulls the reins on spending

Water tower paint job, city bus in budget

By JADE MCDOWELL
East Oregonian

After years of plentiful construction, the city of Hermiston will slow down spending with a 2016-2017 proposed budget that is \$14 million smaller than the year before.

City Manager Byron Smith told the budget committee Wednesday that a large part of the decrease comes from the completion of a long list of capital improvements.

"We finished up a lot of construction projects in the current fiscal year," he said.

The average citizen, however, may not notice much of a difference. Multi-million dollar projects in recent years, such as a new recycled water treatment plant, have been largely out of the public eye, while proposed projects, such as a repaint of the water tower and construction of the senior center, will cost much less but be more visible.

For 2016-2017 the city's big spending item will be construction of the Harkenrider Center,



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

The City of Hermiston is allocating \$75,000 for repairs and repainting of the water tower in its budget for next year.

a new senior center that will start construction downtown in the fall. It will be funded with a \$2 million Community Development Block Grant and up to \$750,000 of the city's money.

Smith said strategies such as providing in-kind labor will likely reduce the cost, but,

"we're going to budget for the full amount and then we can back off from there."

Another sizable item is \$100,000 in the street fund for an overlay on North First Place between Elm Avenue and Harper Road. Smith said the overlay will keep the street

usable for a few more years while the city continues to try and get funds (possibly as part of the transportation package being put together for the 2017 legislative session) to replace it completely.

See BUDGET/7A

MILTON-FREEWATER

Man to face murder charge in stabbing

East Oregonian

The Milton-Freewater man accused of fatally stabbing his wife and injuring his young children Thursday will return to Umatilla County to face a charge of murder.

Oscar Villegas Garcia appeared Friday in Walla Walla County Superior Court, where he waived extradition, according to the *Walla Walla Union-Bulletin*.

Umatilla County District Attorney Dan Primus said Friday afternoon he wasn't aware of the result of that court appearance but intended to charge Villegas Garcia with murder.

Police were called to a house at 362 N.E. 13th Ave., Milton-Freewater, late Thursday morning and found Garcia, 26, his wife Maria Villegas, 24, and their children, a 4-year-old girl and 2-year-old boy, with stab and cut wounds. All four were taken to Washington hospitals, and Maria Villegas died of her wounds Thursday at Providence St. Mary Medical Center, Walla Walla.

The girl was flown Thursday to Sacred Heart Medical Center, Spokane, and the boy was treated at St. Mary. The *East Oregonian* has been unable to determine the status of the children.

Villegas Garcia's wounds were believed to be self-inflicted, according to a report from Oregon State Police. At his Friday hearing, his left arm was bandaged from wrist to elbow, according to the *U-B*, and five security officers escorted him. He also mumbled what court personnel referred to as prayer recitation.

PENDLETON

A fight for survival

Hunter recounts bear attack in Starkey Unit

By GEORGE PLAVEN
East Oregonian

Shane Thomas doesn't remember how long the attack lasted. He figures it was maybe a minute. It felt a lot longer.

All Thomas remembers is the adrenaline that kicked in after he was charged and thrown to the ground by a black bear Sunday, May 22 in the Starkey Unit — the same bear he had just shot from his hunting spot on top of the ridge. Thomas went to retrieve the animal from out of

the timber, certain his .30-06 rifle had taken it down.

It hadn't. The bear was wounded, but not dead. By the time Thomas locked eyes with the animal, they were just a few feet away from each other.

"That's when he charged me," Thomas said. "I let my instincts kick in and do their thing."

Thomas, 32, is a life-long hunter and utility worker for Pendleton Parks and Recreation. The trophy room inside his house contains an impressive collection of elk and deer mounts, bear skins and waterfowl, taking up nearly every inch of wall space.

See BEAR/14A



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

Shane Thomas is happy to be home after surviving a bear attack while hunting the animal May 22 in the Grande Ronde Valley near La Grande.



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