



87/59

PARENTS UNDER SCRUTINY
GORILLA ATTACK/7A



STANFIELD WILL PLAY FOR TITLE
BASEBALL/1B



FISHING IS FREE ALL WEEKEND
REGION/3A

EAST OREGONIAN

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 1, 2016

140th Year, No. 163

WINNER OF THE 2015 ONPA GENERAL EXCELLENCE AWARD

One dollar



Pergande

Judge's mistake restarts rape trial

By PHIL WRIGHT
East Oregonian

Edward Pergande of Irrigon could have spent more than 60 years in state prison for the rape and sexual abuse of two young girls. But a judge's error opened the door to a new trial this July.

Pergande, though, has sworn to stay silent at all hearings as a protest against his court-appointed attorney.

A Morrow County jury in 2011 convicted Pergande, 37, of first-degree rape and unlawful sexual penetration and two counts each of first-degree sexual abuse and coercion. The state accused Pergande of the physical and sexual abuse of his then-girlfriend's two daughters in 2008. They did not tell anyone for months, though, and an examination found no physical evidence of sexual abuse.

The girls testified at trial, as did the clinical social worker who treated them for a year and a half. That worker also denied the children showed any indications of someone coaching them for their testimony. The Oregon Court of Appeals in April 2015 ruled Circuit Judge Eva Temple should not have allowed that statement.

"We have repeatedly concluded," the appeals court stated, "that it is plain error for a trial court not to strike testimony of a witness that is an explicit comment on the credibility of another witness."

The ruling also noted the state supreme court has decided this "same type of direct vouching evidence" was "impermissible."

Allowing the testimony was a "grave error," the appeals court found, because the case had no physical evidence.
See TRIAL/7A



Staff photo by Kathy Aney

Last hurrah

Pendleton softball players shed tears after losing to Churchill in extra innings Tuesday during a state semifinal game at Steve Cary Field. The team was playing for its fifth trip to the state championship in seven years. Mac-Hi and Pilot Rock both won semifinal softball games and will play for state titles this weekend. For more, see Page 1B.

Lobbying, contributions dual paths to political clout

By HILLARY BORRUD
Capital Bureau

SALEM — The day after Oregon's primary election, Gov. Kate Brown stepped up to the podium at the opening of a software company's new office in northwest Portland.

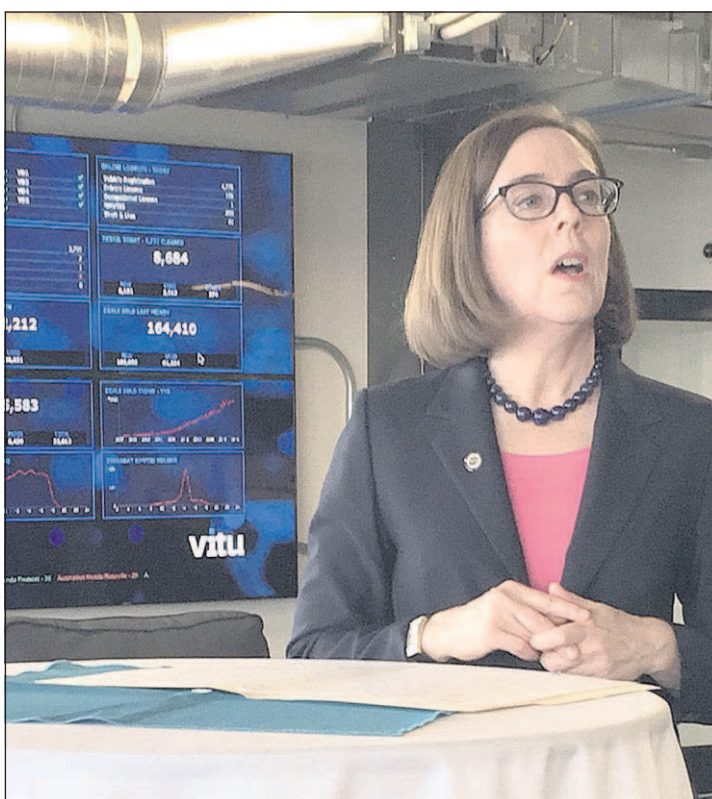
The company, Vitu, operates an electronic vehicle titling and registration system in California and last year won a state contract to expand into Oregon. That was exciting news for Brown, who joined executives from Vitu's parent company Motor Vehicle Software Corporation to celebrate the office opening.

"I am so pleased to be here today to help open Vitu here in the city of Portland," Brown said. "Their very innovative tools to modernize vehicle registration, I think, will be an essential service for Oregonians throughout the state."

For the Motor Vehicle Software Corporation, the governor's attendance at the office opening followed two years of investments in lobbying and political contributions in Oregon.

The Motor Vehicle Software Corporation reported spending \$108,000 on lobbying in Oregon from 2014 through March, and contributed \$107,500 to local and state politicians' campaigns since 2013. This included \$20,000 in contributions to Brown's campaign, with the latest contribution in early May, according to state campaign finance records.

The combination of spending on lobbying and campaign contributions is common practice for many companies and interest groups in Oregon, which has no limits on the size of political contributions and expenditures. However, it is



Courtesy of David Thalberg

Gov. Kate Brown spoke at the May 18 opening of the Portland office of the software company Vitu, which recently won a state contract to provide electronic registration and titling services at car dealerships in Oregon. Vitu's parent company spent more than \$200,000 on lobbying and campaign contributions in Oregon starting in late 2013, including \$20,000 in contributions to Brown's gubernatorial election campaign.

difficult for the public to track the connection because the state uses separate systems to record political campaign and lobbying spending. The state also does not require lobbyists to disclose if they play a role in raising political donations.

As for the Motor Vehicle Software Corporation's spending, it is dwarfed by the millions invested by the state's top lobbying and political spenders.

For example, the Oregon Nurses Association reported spending \$2.3 million to lobby

lawmakers and other state officials from 2007 through 2015. It was the second largest amount spent on lobbying by any private sector group during that time period, according to analysis of state records by the EO Media Group/Pamplin Media Group Capital Bureau. Since 2008, the nurses' political action committee also contributed more than \$1.5 million to a long list of state officials and lawmakers, including co-chairs of the Legislature's budget writing Joint Committee on

See CLOUT/8A

Officials hope for cool June as fire season draws near

Lawmakers propose funding fixes after explosive 2015

By GEORGE PLAVERN
East Oregonian

Early forecasts suggest this year's wildfire season should be closer to normal across Eastern Oregon, though another hot, dry month in June could change that outlook.

Joe Hessel, unit forester for the Oregon Department of Forestry in La Grande, said there is still plenty of green grass in the Blue Mountains, but heavier fuels like down trees and branches are drier than usual thanks to the effects of drought.

The past couple years have seen ODF declare fire season historically early in northeast Oregon. Hessel said the district was feeling pretty good about bucking that trend in 2016 until April came along and quickly melted the region's snowpack. Since then, Hessel said the potential for fires — especially at lower elevations — has been rising.

"We're all waiting to see what happens in June," Hessel said. "If June is relatively warm or dry, or both, that will reflect through the rest of the fire year."

Fire season began on June 16 in 2015, and a number of devastating infernos kept firefighters scrambling from one blaze to the next. The Canyon Creek, Windy Ridge and Grizzly Bear complexes all started about the same time in August, and together burned nearly 300,000 acres of rangeland and forests.

Hessel doesn't know if it will be as bad this year, but he's keeping a close eye on the conditions. If the weather stays warm and dry, it could start parching some of that grass and make it more likely fires are able to spread. The seasonal trend, Hessel said, is a little ahead of schedule.

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More inside
Fires across Umatilla County have fire chiefs warning caution
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