

**MILTON-FREEWATER**

# Murder defendant now in Umatilla County Jail

By PHIL WRIGHT  
East Oregonian

A Milton-Freewater man is now in the Umatilla County Jail, Pendleton, charged with murder.

Oscar Pastor Villegas Garcia, 26, appeared Tuesday morning in circuit court in Pendleton via video from the jail to face charges related to injuring his two young children and the stabbing death of their mother and his wife, 24-year-old Maria Villegas.



Villegas Garcia

police Thursday morning responded to the couple's home at 362 N.E. 13th Ave., Milton-Freewater, and found Garcia, Maria Villegas, and their children, a 4-year-old girl and 2-year-old boy, with stab and cut wounds. Maria Villegas died Thursday at a Walla Walla hospital.

Villegas Garcia also received medical help and was in the county jail in Walla Walla until Friday morning, when he waived his right to extradition. He was in the Pendleton

jail by 5 p.m. that day. The Umatilla County District Attorney's Office charged Villegas Garcia with one count of murder and two of attempted aggravated murder, according to court records. Circuit Judge Lynn Hampton set bail at \$5 million. She also prohibited Villegas Garcia from having any contact with his children or their custodians.

Villegas Garcia did not enter any plea. His next hearing is Friday afternoon, which indicates the district attorney plans to present the case to a grand jury for an indictment before that proceeding.



Photo contributed by Pendleton Fire & Ambulance

## Pendleton firefighters knock down blaze

Firefighters pounced on a two-acre grass fire along Highway 11 between Adams Road and Lindell Lane in Pendleton. Pendleton Fire Chief Mike Ciraulo said the blaze appears to have been started by a muffler from farm equipment that had been working on the property. The fire threatened a nearby home and barn, but Ciraulo said they were able to get it under control within 20 minutes.

**BRIEFLY**

The board also plants to discuss jail medical services and more.

### More 48-star flags located, retired at cemetery

HERMISTON — A total of five 48-star flags were retired Monday night from the Avenue of Flags that lines Hermiston Cemetery every Memorial Day.

When Hermiston resident Ken May found a 48-star flag before this year's Memorial Day ceremony, he was told by members of Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 4750 that it was thought to be the last 48-star flag left in the approximately 600 flags used each year. The VFW manages the Avenue of Flags, and member Duane Storms said previous 48-star flags were placed into shadow boxes and put on display at the VFW hall.

Later in the day a search of the cemetery before the flags were taken down by volunteers resulted in four more 48-star flags being located. Storms said all of them will be placed in shadow boxes and displayed. The flags displayed at the Avenue of Flags are casket flags donated by veterans' families. Names of the deceased the flag honors are stenciled on the side of the flag.

### Open burning to close June 15 in Pendleton

PENDLETON — Open burning will close Wednesday, June 15 for the city of Pendleton, along with the Rieth, McKay Dam, Lower McKay and Riverside fire districts.

Residents should plan accordingly. Special burning permits are available through the Pendleton Fire and Ambulance at no charge. Open burning includes any burning done outdoors, such as burn barrels or debris piles. Burn barrels are not

allowed at any time during the year within city limits, but can be used within the fire districts on "Green Days." To find out if it is a "Green Day," call the Umatilla County Burn Line at 541-278-6397.

It is illegal to conduct any open burning that creates a nuisance or safety hazard. For a complete list of burning regulations, visit [www.pendleton.or.us/fire-ambulance](http://www.pendleton.or.us/fire-ambulance).

### New exhibit opens Thursday

PENDLETON — A new exhibit at Pendleton Center for the Arts explores dualities through visual palindromes akin to the infamous Rorschach psychology test, with each drawing reflecting the altered shadow of its other half.

Light Mirror: Mirror Shadow by Nika Blasser generates an environment of quiet contemplation, revealing moments of poetic clarity where nature and artistic agency are fluidly intertwined. The exhibit opens Thursday with an artist's reception from 5:30-7 p.m. at 214 N. Main St., Pendleton. It is free and open to the public.

Blasser received a bachelor's degree in painting, drawing and printmaking from Portland State University and a master's in fine art from the University of Alberta, Edmonton.

She has had several solo shows and participated in numerous group exhibits across the Pacific Northwest. Working with a broad range of media, Blasser explores the possibilities of each material and how they may be best exploited to generate quiet, pensive examinations of our surroundings.

The arts center is open Tuesday through Fridays from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. and Saturdays from noon to 4 p.m. The exhibit remains on view through Saturday, July 2. Admission is free.

### Free fishing this weekend in Oregon waters

PENDLETON — Free Fishing Weekend will be celebrated June 4-5 in Oregon.

During those two days, anglers won't be required to have a license, tags or endorsements to fish Oregon's waters. The Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife will host a number of free events across the state, releasing more than 185,000 trout at 80 different locations.

The following events will be held Saturday in northeast Oregon:

- Twin Ponds, Ukiah, 7 a.m. to noon
- Cutsforth Pond, Heppner, 8:30-11 a.m.
- 203 Pond, Baker City, 9 a.m. to noon
- McHaley Pond, Prairie City, 9 a.m. to noon
- Marr Pond, Wallowa, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

At Twin Ponds, ODFW and the Umatilla National Forest will offer competitive events to kids 16 years and younger, including a casting contest and biggest fish contest. There will be some equipment on hand for those who need it, though children should be accompanied by an adult and bring their own gear if they can. Hot dogs, chips and soda will be provided to everyone who attends.

Saturday, June 4 is also Oregon State Parks Day, with free camping and admission to encourage families to explore the outdoors. Campsite reservations may be made by calling 1-800-452-5687 before 5 p.m. Friday, or reserve online at [www.oregonstateparks.org](http://www.oregonstateparks.org). While the campsite rental is free, an \$8 non-refundable reservation fee still applies, and not all parks may accept reservations.

### Heavy trucks may get ban from two county roads

PENDLETON — The Umatilla County Board of Commissioners will not hold its regular meeting Wednesday.

The board rescheduled the meeting for 9 a.m. on June 6.

The board at that time plans to hold a public meeting on allowing all-terrain vehicles on certain county roads. The board also will consider banning heavy trucks from Canal and Baxter roads.

County public works director Tom Fellows determined the roads were not built to handle lots of heavy truck traffic, according to county documents. The ban would not apply to local farm trucks.

The county would place "No Through Trucks" signs at the south end of Canal Road (County Road No. 1179) at its intersection with Highway 395 and at the north end of Canal Road (County Road No. 1203) at its intersection with Highway 207. The county also would install the signs at the west end of Baxter Road (County Road No. 1246) at its intersection with Highway 207 and at the east end at the intersection with South Edwards Road.

## Fire chiefs warn of early start to brush fire season

By JADE MCDOWELL  
East Oregonian

A fire near Two Rivers Correctional Institution on Monday ended up burning about 1,800 acres, according to Umatilla Fire Department Chief Steve Potts.

He said the cause is still under investigation, but will likely end up being declared undetermined.

"We have no ideas, actually," he said. "It's out in the middle of nowhere."

Reports of a fire along the Columbia River between the prison and Hat Rock State Park started coming in at 12:50 p.m. on Monday. The fire burned the area around the prison property, causing a lockdown, but Potts said there was no need to evacuate the compound, which is "pretty self-sufficient."

TRCI did provide a hand crew of inmates to assist firefighters from Hermiston, Pendleton, Umatilla,

Stanfield, Echo, Boardman, Irrigon and the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Oregon State Police, Oregon Department of Transportation, Umatilla Police Department and TRCI correctional officers assisted with traffic control while Highway 730 and nearby roads were shut down for a few hours in the afternoon.

Mop-up continued into the evening, and firefighters returned in the morning to put out a flare-up.

"I had a crew there until 10:30 last night to keep an eye on it," Potts said.

He said there were some access issues when fire crews first arrived to fight the fire. A locked gate blocked vehicles from driving on the trail between McNary Beach and Hat Rock, where the lower portion of the fire burned, and on the upper portion, "there's no road to speak of."

Potts noted it was the

second major fire for the area in a week (the first was at the Umatilla Chemical Depot on May 20) and asked people to please be as careful as possible about not sparking fires that can spread quickly in current conditions.

"It doesn't look good out there," he said.

Hermiston Fire & Emergency Services Chief Scott Stanton echoed that plea, noting that a warm, dry spring meant fuels like sagebrush have dried out sooner than usual. That combined with windy weather has been a "recipe for fire."

Hermiston, Stanfield and Umatilla had already provided mutual aid for another brush fire on Lind Road on Memorial Day, and Stanton said there were six other minor fire calls throughout the day.

The open burning period ended Tuesday for the Hermiston Fire & Emergency Service District.



## Come Celebrate!

Join your friends & neighbors at the Wallowa Lake Lodge for an afternoon of fun & festivities.

Saturday, June 4th  
3pm to Dusk

- Food & refreshments, no host bar, live music, meet owners & donors, CJD Rodeo Court, video presentation and
- Tours of the lodge & grounds!

Champagne & Cider Toast  
4pm



**HAMLEY STEAKHOUSE & SALOON**

**9<sup>th</sup> ANNIVERSARY**

**FOOD & DRINK SPECIALS**  
PARTY STARTS @ 4P • DINNER SERVICE @ 5P

**LIVE MUSIC**  
MURRAY DUNLAP 5-7:30P  
TYLOR & THE TRAIN ROBBERS 8-11P

**FRIDAY June 3**

"on the lawn" CORNER OF S.E. COURT & MAIN, PENDLETON