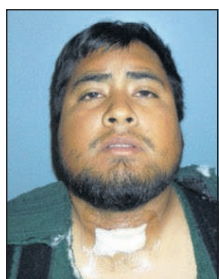


MILTON-FREEWATER

Garcia charged with murder, 11 other counts

By PHIL WRIGHT
East Oregonian



Villegas Garcia

Oscar Pastor Villegas Garcia of Milton-Freewater now faces a charge of murder, in addition to 11 other counts stemming from the May 26 knife attack that left his wife dead and children injured.

A Umatilla County grand jury indicted Garcia, 26, on Wednesday. He appeared Friday afternoon via video from the Umatilla County Jail for an arraignment in circuit court in Pendleton. District Attorney Dan Primus said the

charges are as follows: one count of murder; four counts of attempted aggravated murder; two counts of first-degree assault; three counts of unlawful use of a weapon; two counts of first-degree criminal mistreatment.

Milton-Freewater

police

responded May 26 to the couple's home at 362 N.E. 13th Ave., Milton-Freewater, according to Oregon State Police. They found Garcia, his wife, Maria Villegas, 24, and their children, a 4-year-old girl and 2-year-old boy, with stab and cut wounds. Maria Villegas died that day at a Walla Walla hospital. The children were treated at hospitals and later released to family.

Garcia still had a bandage covering his throat at Friday's proceeding.

Circuit Judge Lynn Hampton

kept Garcia's bail at \$5 million. Attorney Jill Weygandt with Intermountain Public Defenders, Pendleton, told the court she was standing in for fellow attorney Kara Davis and did not enter a plea. She also asked for a bail hearing.

Primus said it would take 30 days to provide the public defenders with relevant reports and documents. Hampton set the morning of July 5 for Garcia to enter a plea.

Weygandt also advised Garcia not to talk to anyone about his case

except his attorney. Garcia said he has yet to meet her. Weygandt said she expected Davis to meet with him next week.

About 20 people attended the arraignment. Primus and his chief deputy prosecutor, Jackie Jenkins, met with them afterward as victims of the crimes.

Supporters of the Garcia family have held events and set up a Gofundme account to raise money to benefit the children and pay medical and other expenses. The fund had almost \$6,400 as of Friday afternoon.



Photo contributed by David Norton

Parade of Boardman graduates

Seniors from Riverside High School in Boardman participated in the school's first "graduation parade" on Friday. Soon-to-be graduates walked the halls of Sam Boardman Elementary (seen here) and Windy River Elementary, and were congratulated by elementary students along the way. "Going into the parade the seniors weren't sure what to expect," said David Norton, vice principal at Riverside, "and once they left all of them had huge smiles on their faces and said that it was an amazing experience to go back to where they started school."

PENDLETON

Public health director takes Walla Walla job

East Oregonian

Umatilla County is losing its public health director.

Public Health Administrator Meghan DeBolt accepted the head job with the Walla Walla County Department of Community Health. She starts in July, filling a void left by Harvey Crowder, who retired in May.

DeBolt was chosen unanimously by Walla Walla County Commissioners to fill the position, which pays a salary of \$88,800. While the salary bump was attractive, she said the move is really a family matter. Her husband Rob, who recently retired from the U.S. Coast Guard, is a Walla Walla native who plans to study accounting at Walla Walla Community College and then Washington State University. Their

daughter is about to enter school, so the time seemed right.

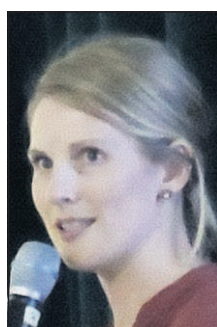
"It was really a heavy decision," DeBolt said. "I love it here. We've built a great team of people who are here because they care about public health. Commissioner (George) Murdock is an amazing boss."

DeBolt, a Pendleton native, took the Umatilla County job in August 2014. Before that, the health director position had been filled and vacated twice in the previous year.

Telling Murdock and her staff about the move was difficult.

"But, they get it," she said. "You've got to do what's best for your family."

Murdock will act as interim director until DeBolt's replacement is found.



DeBolt

Forest Service buildings to be sold for salvage

PENDLETON — The Umatilla National Forest is selling off 10 homes, one garage and one office building for salvage that were once part of the agency's Dale Ranger District.

In 1984, the Dale Ranger District merged with the nearby Ukiah Ranger District to form what is now the North Fork John Day Ranger District. Headquarters for the new district were located in Ukiah, while Dale became a work center and provided housing for employees.

The entire Dale site was closed in 2005 due to a declining budget and growing maintenance costs. The forest is now working to sell or transfer all 25 buildings.

Bids will be accepted from June 10 through June 30. All structures must be removed no later than 60 days after purchase. Bidders are strongly encouraged to inspect the buildings in person before submitting their offer.

No land will be included in the sale of the buildings.

To schedule an inspection appointment, contact Sissy Green, support services supervisor for the North Fork John Day Ranger District, at 541-427-5310.

A dozen stock dogs in Idaho killed by strychnine poisoning

By SEAN ELLIS
EO Media Group

CANYON COUNTY, Idaho — Fourteen stock and guard dogs have been poisoned with strychnine in this part of southwestern Idaho since early April and 12 have died.

The poisoning of the dogs, which are used to guard and shepherd sheep and goats, has occurred over several weeks.

"We lost another dog today. The poisoning is still going on," the dogs' owner, Casey Echevarria, told Capital Press May 30.

The dogs were intentionally poisoned with strychnine, said Dr. Brent Varriale, a Fruitland veterinarian who examined three of them. He said they had large amounts of green dyed grain in their stomachs, which is consistent with gopher bait that contains strychnine.

The gopher bait was mixed with a significant amount of raw ground meat and the amount of bait found in each dog would have required mixing it with food to encourage the dogs to eat as much of it as they did, he said.

Varriale said he examines dogs that have consumed gopher bait and suffered strychnine poisoning about once every few years and they never have that much of the bait in their stomachs.

The large number of Echevarria's dogs that have suffered strychnine poisoning this spring, coupled with the large amount of bait found in their stomachs, "tells me it was done intentionally," Varriale said.

Varriale saved and froze stomach content samples from each dog and contacted the Canyon County Sheriff's Department, which investigated the incidents but has not identified any suspects.

Varriale said strychnine poisoning is a bad way to die because it causes paralysis so the dogs can't breathe and they suffocate to death.

"They may not catch the person that did it but I hope it at least ... prevents it from continuing," he said of the reason he contacted law enforcement. "It's a terrible way to die."

Echevarria said the dogs cost him between \$1,500 to \$2,500 each and although the poisonings have cost his

operation a lot of money, he's more concerned about the dogs' suffering.

"This does piss me off," he said. "The way they've done it is more cruel than shooting them with a gun. I don't want publicity for me. It's more about getting the word out there so it doesn't happen to (any more) dogs."

The poisonings have drawn the attention of Idaho's Humane Society of the United States branch.

"This should be publicized," said HSUS Idaho Director Lisa Kauffman. "Strychnine poisoning is a really horrible way to go. That is an excruciating death for those dogs."

Idaho's animal abuse felony law, which was strengthened this year, does not apply to these incidents, Kauffman said, because production agriculture animals, which include stock and working dogs, are specifically exempt.

However, she said, another state law that has been on the books for years makes it a felony to intentionally poison a production ag animal, including stock dogs, that is worth more than \$1,000.

BOARDMAN

ConAgra promises environmental project to offset \$2,400 fine

East Oregonian

Oregon environmental regulators issued a \$2,400 penalty to ConAgra Foods Lamb Weston for emitting too much pollution at its potato processing plant at 750 N.E. Columbia Ave., Boardman. The company is looking at an environmental project to cover most of the fine.

The Oregon Department of Environmental Quality in a written statement on May 23 reported the ConAgra's air contaminant discharge permit limits emissions of particulate matter less than 2.5 microns in size to no more than nine tons per year on a rolling 12-month calendar. ConAgra's rolling average between June 2014 and April 2015, though, ranged between 9.96 and 10.96 tons.

"Particulate matter can

contribute to respiratory distress and cause serious health problems including decreased lung function, irregular heartbeat and chronic bronchitis," according to the DEQ.

ConAgra Foods had until May 19 to appeal the penalty. Jenny Root, environmental law specialist with the DEQ, reported ConAgra did not file an appeal, and rather than pay the \$2,400, the company "intends to perform a supplemental environmental project to mitigate a portion of the penalty."

The environmental department allows offenders to spend up to 80 percent of a penalty amount on a project that protects public health or improves the environment. "ConAgra is working on selecting a project, and that project will have to be approved by DEQ," Root said in an email.

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