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One dollar

PGG sells grain assets to United Grain

Deal includes infrastructure, inventory, contracts

By **GEORGE PLAVERN**
East Oregonian

Pendleton Grain Growers might be a thing of the past, but its upcountry elevators and Columbia River terminal will remain open under new ownership.

United Grain Corporation, based in Vancouver, Washington, has agreed to buy all of PGG's grain assets including facilities, contracts and inventory. The deal was announced Tuesday, though terms were not disclosed.

PGG announced it would try to sell its grain division in October

2015, foreshadowing the co-op's final collapse and dissolution on May 2. Negotiations continued with United Grain, whose vice president of business development, Tony Flagg, used to head up Pendleton Flour Mills.

United Grain is one of the West Coast's largest grain exporters, owned by the Mitsui Group of Japan. Mitsui is one of the largest corporate groups in the world, with a market value of \$22.5 billion, according to Forbes. Rick Jacobson, PGG general manager, said United Grain will invest "a significant amount of money" upgrading facilities around Pendleton,

something PGG wasn't able to do in recent years.

"They will be looking for speed and space to meet the changing needs of the growers," Jacobson said. "I think this is going to be a step in the right direction."

Flagg did not return calls Tuesday for comment. United Grain is in the process of opening local offices and has retained a majority of PGG employees, according to a press release from the co-op. The sale comes about a month ahead of wheat harvest for most Eastern Oregon farms.

Tim Hawkins, chairman of the PGG Board of Directors, said the deal

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Staff photo by Kathy Aney
Pendleton Grain Growers has agreed to sell its grain division to United Grain Corporation.



Staff photo by Kathy Aney

Director of Mission Services Rod Harwood recently got the news that he has lost his job at St. Anthony Hospital. The layoffs of Harwood and 10 other administrative support staff over past months are part of a cost reduction and restructuring effort on the part of the hospital's parent company, Catholic Health Initiatives.

Faith in the future

Pastor looks forward after layoff from hospital

By **KATHY ANEY**
East Oregonian

When Pastor Rod Harwood wrote his baccalaureate message for Helix High School a couple of weeks ago, he had no idea he would be counseling himself along with the graduates.

The speech, entitled "Lessons of Life," contained four messages. Lesson one: Life is sometimes hard and can seem unfair. Lesson two: You're not in control.

Lesson three: All things come to an end. Lesson four: It's not about you — there's something bigger. He ended by saying, "Be at peace and go forth."

Harwood, the director of Mission Services at St. Anthony Hospital, arrived at work May 18 expecting a normal day at work.

He realized something was awry, however, when he arrived at a meeting with St. Anthony President/CEO Harry Geller and Human Resources Director

Janeen Reding. Their grave expressions pulled him up short.

Harwood was about to be laid off after 19 years at the hospital, and Geller and Reding were sick about it.

"This is the hardest one I've had to do," Harwood remembers Reding saying.

"We knew any one of us could go at any time," Harwood said. "You always think it'll be the other guy."

Thursday is Harwood's last

day.

Harwood isn't the only casualty — the number of administrative staff at St. Anthony has dropped from 19 to eight.

St. Anthony's parent company, Catholic Health Initiatives, reported a \$134.7 million operating loss in the first quarter of fiscal year 2015 — a huge swing from the \$184.2 million surplus reported for the same period the

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MILTON-FREEWATER

Family, DA work to deny early parole for murderer

By **ANTONIO SIERRA**
East Oregonian

A Milton-Freewater man convicted of murder could go free much sooner than originally anticipated.

Jon Quintin Johnston was sentenced to a minimum 30 years in prison for killing a Brownsville couple in 1990 on Linton Mountain Road east of Weston. But a 2010 Oregon Supreme Court decision required a second parole hearing be held for Johnston, 52, at the Oregon State Correctional Institution in Salem on Tuesday.

The Board of Parole and Post-Prison Supervision did not make a final decision Tuesday and elected to deliberate further.

Meanwhile, the family members of the victims are continuing to speak out against his release.

Carine San Martin-Jeffery is the granddaughter of victims George and Charmaine Meyers and also lives in Brownsville, a small Linn County town southeast of Corvallis.

Speaking for the victims' family, San Martin-Jeffery said Johnston is unfit for release, especially considering the violent nature of the murders.

George, 61, and Charmaine Meyers, 62, interrupted a robbery being committed by Johnston and an accomplice, David Linn Selders. Johnston shot them in the head and beat them with rocks, killing the couple.

A judge sentenced Johnston in 1992 to two life sentences for the murders and required he serve at least 30 years.

That changed with the Supreme Court ruling, which said murderers could be eligible for parole after 20 years, as long as the murder was committed before 1999 and the state declares the convict can be rehabilitated.

Johnston received that designation and got his first parole hearing in 2014.

According to the Oregon Crime Victims Law Center, a nonprofit representing the victims' family, the parole board deferred his release for two years after he blamed the murders on Selders, who he said told him to shoot, and the Meyerses themselves, who he thought might be armed.

Rosemary Brewer, the center's executive director, said she is unsure how the board will decide this time.

Brewer said Johnston told the board he has undergone more counseling since the last his last hearing and his mental evaluations are more positive.

While the parole board usually renders a decision at the end of the meeting, Brewer said the board sometimes takes longer with more complicated cases, although she expects a decision sometime in the next couple weeks.

In both parole hearings, Umatilla County District Attorney Dan Primus joined the victims' family in opposing his release.

In addition to sympathizing with the family, Primus said he has a duty to protect Umatilla County residents from a murderer being released back into their community.

"It was such a horrendous scenario," he said. "It was a brutal attack."

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PENDLETON

District could try for another bond

\$4 million state grant contingent on match

By **ANTONIO SIERRA**
East Oregonian

With several other nearby school districts using it to help pass bond measures, the Pendleton School District is the next school district to take a shot at the Oregon School Capital Improvement Matching Program.

The Pendleton School Board unanimously agreed to apply for the grant, but did not commit to putting the corresponding bond measure on the ballot.

The grant, which is contingent on passing a bond in November,

provides a \$4 million match for facility improvements and is awarded based on community poverty levels or a lottery for school districts that enter their applications during an early filing period.

District Director of Business Services Michelle Jones said the district is in the middle of the pack when it comes to poverty levels, but it could still be eligible for the lottery.

During the first round of grant awards, the Athena-Weston School District was one of the lottery winners while Echo and Milton-Freewater were selected based on poverty levels. All three school districts passed bonds in May.

Jones said the district has facility needs beyond the improvements paid for by the \$55 million bond passed in 2013.

If the district gets the grant and passes the bond, Jones said the money could go toward inside and outside improvements to McKay Creek Elementary School, Sunridge Middle School, Pendleton High School and West Hills Intermediate School, soon to be the Pendleton Tech and Trade Center.

Board member Bob Rosselle was worried about the implication of another bond campaign so soon after the last one.

"I have a feeling, sooner or

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