

VALDEZ: Worked at UPS for 20 years

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to the point we would like to see some of his friends, maybe hear some memories we didn't know about," he said.

Tony said Kenneth was the type to "try anything at least once," and had so many different interests outside of work that it was hard to keep track of them all. A few included wrestling, horseback riding, four-wheeling and other outdoor sports.

"Even now, talking to his friends, I say, 'Really, he liked to do that?'" he said.

Kenneth wrestled for Hermiston High School as a teenager and returned to the school in 2013 as a volunteer wrestling coach. His brothers said he was proud of the kids he coached and would talk about their successes to the rest of the family.

"He worked nights, and he would go straight out of work to go to tournaments without sleep," Diaz said.

Kenneth grew up in Zillah, Washington, until his family moved to Hermiston partway through high school. He was the second of four boys and is survived by his brothers, his mother and his three children.

He attended Blue Mountain Community College, and Tony said later his brother found a "home" at UPS, where he worked in various positions — including package delivery and in the warehouse — for 20 years. He said it has meant a lot to him to hear from people at UPS and elsewhere how many lives in the community his brother touched.

"He was genuine," Tony

Show your support

Candlelight vigil for all those affected by the tragedy:

Wednesday, 8:30 p.m., McKenzie Park, Hermiston
Participants are asked to bring candles, glow sticks, small flashlights or other devices that will help light up the park.

Celebration of Hurtado's life:

Saturday, 10:00 a.m., Hermiston Assembly of God, 730 E. Hurlburt Ave.

Celebration of Valdez's life:

Saturday, 2 p.m., New Hope Community Church, 1350 S Hwy 395, Hermiston

said. "If you talked to his friends, they would say Kenny would be there in a pinch."

A celebration of life will be Saturday, August 27 at 2 p.m. at the New Hope Community Church, 1350 S Hwy 395, Hermiston, with a potluck gathering to follow in the fellowship center. Tony said anyone who wanted to come pay their respects was welcome, and people who were anxious to help the family in some way could contact New Hope about helping cook, set up or clean up.

He also said that if people wanted to make donations to the family to help cover the cost of funeral services, the best method would be through an account set up in Kenneth Valdez's name at Columbia Bank.

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ODF: 31 fires have burned total of 834 acres so far this season in northeast Oregon

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backlog of administrative work as ODF files insurance claims and emergency requests from federal agencies. Some claims have not been completely processed, and the audit shows ODF has paid \$1.5 million in interest on loans to bridge fire funding.

Non-fire programs also contribute to the firefighting effort within ODF, which is absorbed into their budgets. The last three fire seasons have delayed the department's other work, including planning and management to make the forests more fire-resilient.

"It is understandable how other core missions of the agency could suffer when the priority each summer shifts to fighting raging wildfires and protecting Oregonians," Atkins said.

The ODF Northeast Oregon District is responsible for protecting 1.9 million acres of state and private land in Umatilla, Union, Wallowa and Baker counties, as well as small portions of Morrow, Grant and Malheur counties. John Buckman, district forester, said he has about 25 permanent staff, which has remained mostly flat over the years. The district also hires roughly 50 seasonal firefighters.

Prior to the 2015 season, the 10-year average for acres burned within the district was 2,500. When fire season gets busy, Buckman said all foresters chip in on suppression efforts, but the work doesn't end there. They also help private landowners with salvage logging and replanting trees after the fires are contained.

Those were big jobs a year ago on the 82,659-acre Grizzly Bear Complex, and 103,887-acre Comet-Windy Ridge Fire, Buckman said.

"They're working very hard, managing their normal day-to-day jobs and, in particular, during the fire season," he said.

Buckman said the season has been less severe so far this year, and they hope to get back to a normal routine. The Northeast Oregon District declared fire season June 28, and so far have

"More and more severe wildfires are a reality the agency must take into account as it tries to meet its larger mission."

— **Jeanne Atkins,**
Oregon Secretary of State

seen 31 fires burning a total of 834 acres.

Buckman wouldn't say whether he thought longer, hotter fire seasons represented a new normal. He commended his staff, calling them a "can-do bunch." However, State Forester Doug Decker agreed with the conclusion and recommendations in the state's audit, and said they are committed to improving their practices in a letter he sent to auditors.

Among those recommendations:

- Tracking costs, staffing, funding and workload impacts on non-fire programs during fire seasons.

- Track data on strategies to prevent catastrophic wildfires.

- Develop a systematic workforce planning strategy to ensure the agency can meet future needs.

"We welcome and have embraced the audit process as yet another opportunity to review and improve our practices and processes, and we are committed to incorporating these recommendations into planning processes where the real work forward will be implemented," Decker wrote.

Millions of acres remain at high risk of wildfire in Oregon, the audit points out, including state, federal and private forests. Atkins said a healthy and sustainable forestry department will help lead to healthy and sustainable communities.

"More and more severe wildfires are a reality the agency must take into account as it tries to meet its larger mission," she said.

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BUILDING: Arts center opened in 2001

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Pazzi Chapel in Florence, Italy. Lavadour said because locals resented the fact that Johnson, a Portland architect, was designing the building, Pendleton architect R.W. Hatch was hired to oversee the contractors.

Also well-known in its history — though for more sensational reasons — is the story of Ruth Cochran. She was closing the library one night in October 1947 when she suffered an aneurysm, and ultimately died the next day. Stories have circulated that her spirit still haunts the building, which attracts plenty of visitors. Lavadour and fellow staff members dismiss those rumors.

"We just tell them she was a librarian who worked here," Lavadour said. "There's no haunting."

The library's first day was preceded by a mad dash of people moving books from old city hall to the new location the night before. According to an *East Oregonian* article published on Aug. 26, 1916, "Not a single hour has been lost to the patrons of the library."

The library was eventually renamed Pendleton



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

Karen and Fritz Hill look at a photography exhibit in the East Oregonian Gallery on Tuesday at the Pendleton Center for the Arts.

Public Library and remained in the Carnegie Building until 1996, when upgrades such as ADA accessibility and earthquake structural improvements proved to be too costly. The library moved to the Helen McCune building at 502 S.W. Dorion Ave., while the Carnegie Building was suddenly vacant.

Current Pendleton Public Library director Mary

Finney worked at the library from 1990 until they moved locations in 1996. Before her move to Pendleton, she worked in another Carnegie building, the Winfield Public Library in Winfield, Kansas. Though Finney said she arrived at the Pendleton library after its Main Street heyday, she remembered the steam-heated building having a cozy feel while working there.

"It was always a pleasant place to be because it felt homey," she said. "I really enjoyed working there and felt honored to be in that building."

After getting approved by the city, the Pendleton Arts Council began raising money for a \$1.8 million renovation in 1997 and opened the arts center in 2001. The renovation included replacing old structures, changing the basement layout and preserving the

Italian-renaissance architecture that Johnson originally sought.

Though the building changed through the renovation and now has a different name, Lavadour said the arts center serves the same purpose that it was originally intended for: giving the community a place to congregate.

"We believe that — just like the library gave books to people for free — it's important to serve the community," she said. "When it's free for everybody, you get such a diverse group of people in the building."

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Staff photo by E.J. Harris

A stained-glass window by Portland artist Robert Middlestead adorns the ceiling of the Pendleton Center for the Arts building.



WHAT ENERGY SAVINGS AWAIT YOUR HOME? LET'S FIND OUT.

Start by doing a free online Home Energy Review from Energy Trust of Oregon. You'll get customized energy-saving recommendations and learn all kinds of ways to get more from your energy. Plus Energy Trust can help you with cash incentives and finding a trade ally contractor for your home energy project.



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