



A family gathers around a sign reading “Forever Missed Ken V” during a candlelight vigil Wednesday in Hermiston.



Hundreds gather in McKenzie Park for a candlelight vigil to remember the lives of James “JJ” Hurtado and Ken Valdez on Wednesday.

VIGIL: Valdez worked with a program to keep students out of gangs

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Haight spoke of the Biblical story of Job, who lost everything he owned, his family and health. His friends responded first with support but later with accusations of blame. “We as a community don’t want to make the same mistake,” Haight said. “We do not want to cast shame on anyone. We need to reach out and unconditionally love anyone who was closely affected.”

Many of those who were closely affected were present at the park, including the Valdez family and Bye. Teenagers who went to school with Hurtado or were coached by Valdez and Huston were present in force, wearing Hermiston wrestling gear or T-shirts honoring Hurtado.

Three of his classmates — Janelle Almaguer, Samantha Atilano and Aidan Villarreal — were selling the shirts as a way to raise money for Hurtado’s family. They said they plan to sell them outside Hermiston High School after school next week. The shirts showed pictures of Hurtado with what they said was his favorite saying: “Start unknown, finish unforgettable.”

“JJ was a really good friend of ours, and we wanted to do it for his family,” Atilano said. “He was always smiling, and always there for us.”

Other friends of the victims shared their memories with the group after the moment of silence, eliciting smiles and tears in turn.

One girl remembered how Hurtado would always show up to support his little sister at her dance



Aiden Villarreal, right, and Janelle Almaguer, center, sell t-shirts along with friend Samantha Atilano, not seen, to help raise money for the family of James “JJ” Hurtado before a candlelight vigil at McKenzie Park on Wednesday in Hermiston.

competitions, and drew chuckles when she described how he flirted with the other girls on the team and told them they were pretty.

A teacher in the school district described Valdez’s work with a program to help students stay out of gangs and other trouble, calling him the “MVP volunteer.”

“Ken is a teddy bear,” he said. “His heart is so, so gentle and the kids gravitated toward him.”

Another woman, a nursing student of Bye’s at Blue Mountain Community College, told the group how Bye would always start class with a funny story about her children, including Hurtado.

“You made it so that he was our kid, too,” she told Bye.

After the remembrances, a long line of people came up and hugged Bye. When the night was over, organizer Bonnie Griffith said she

was surprised and grateful to see such a large turnout to honor her former classmate Valdez and the others.

“He was a nice guy. The sweetest guy,” she said through tears. “I never heard anyone say anything bad about him.”

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The various departments in the new Yellowhawk Tribal Health Center will radiate out from a center courtyard that will serve as a spirit room where patients can wait and contemplate.

YELLOWHAWK: Will strive for net-zero energy use

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Departments currently squeezed into five separate structures will come together into a village-themed health center, entwining health care, tribal culture and the latest in green technology.

Sometime in the winter 2017, patients will stroll through the building’s entrance into a circular village of health care services. A glassed-in hallway will ring a courtyard bathed in natural light — a space for waiting and contemplation.

The design beat out at least eight others. Another favored idea included water flowing through the facility. The design, fondly dubbed “The River Runs Through It,” eventually got edged out by “The Village.”

At the beginning of the process, the 10-member project team toured eight other tribal health facilities in places such as Coeur d’Alene and Wasilla, Alaska, to garner ideas. At home, the team honed its vision for the clinic as a place of light and air and patient-centered care. They vetted and ranked architects, finally selecting Seattle-based NBBJ.

The firm has designed some high-octane structures including the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation headquarters, Massachusetts General Hospital, Pauley Pavilion and a trio of 100-foot-tall crystal spheres for Amazon’s Seattle campus that feature suspension

bridges and meeting spaces designed to feel like birds’ nests in trees. The same architect that designed the spheres, Dale Alberta, also headed the Yellowhawk design project.

To get their heads in the game, eight NBBJ team members marinated in tribal culture before ever revving up their design software. JoMarie Tessman, a historian and member of the planning team, helped acclimate the architects by leading a culture day. She dressed in regalia, let them inspect and touch artifacts and guided a tour of the Tamastlikt Cultural Institute.

“We exposed the architects to cultural nuances,” said Yellowhawk Chief Executive Officer Tim Gilbert. “They were sponges.”

NBBJ project manager Neil Piistanen said he and his colleagues went into the day ready to learn.

“Our biggest design strategy is just listening,” Piistanen said.

From the tour and sessions with the Yellowhawk planning team, he and the other architects were able to incorporate important tribal symbols and practices into the design, such as tule mats, fire and huckleberries. The clinic’s walls will be layered with thin cement panels engraved with the pattern of the tule mats once used to cover tule mat lodges. A fire pit at the center of the inner courtyard honors the tribal tradition of gathering around a community fire to share stories. Aluminum panels cut with a pattern of huck-

leberries will catch sun entering the courtyard and create shading that resembles dappled light through huckleberry bushes. The building’s main entrance faces east where the sun rises.

Piistanen said the health center is one of the most energy efficient they have attempted. Energy Oregon Trust granted \$450,000 to the project in exchange for Yellowhawk’s commitment to strive for net-zero energy use. Tiistanen said the facility will use the electrical grid for storage of energy gained through solar panels and a small wind turbine. Energy usage will be reduced by such things as super-thick insulation, strategic placement of windows, efficient cooling and heating systems, LED lighting and general orientation of the building to optimize solar exposure.

Tessman said the community weighed in during the design phase. Employees helped decide the layout of the facility and the location of each department.

“It wasn’t just the team in splendid isolation making all these decisions,” Tessman said.

Though this building might seem dwarfed by some of NBBJ’s glitzy projects, Piistanen said he and his colleagues are excited about Yellowhawk.

“We’re into doing things that make a difference for a community,” he said. “These are people that are pushing the envelope of what health

care means.”

Golden shovels will bite into the construction site this afternoon at 4:30 p.m. The groundbreaking, complete with barbecue, doubles as a celebration of the 20th anniversary of Yellowhawk’s beginning of self-governance.

“In April of 1996, the CTUIR signed a compact with the federal government to assume management of all health care functions for the tribes,” Gilbert said. “That gave the tribes a lot more control.”

The list of key players involved in the Yellowhawk project includes Wenaha’s Dave Fischel, in the role of owner’s representative, who helped guide the planning process. General contractor is Bend-based Kirby Nagelhout Construction.

Funding for the \$26.3 million facility comes through a variety of sources that include loans, a \$3.1 million settlement from the government and up to \$6.5 million in Yellowhawk investment earnings. The CTUIR Board of Trustees meets Monday to authorize tribal funds.

Tessman trusts that all these years of planning and visioning will be worth the headache. She said, “I believe once this clinic is done, we’ll be one of the leading Indian clinics in the region.”

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COBA: Water supply, quality a high priority

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political science.

In 1985, Cobra joined her father as a legislative assistant for one session before heading off into the executive branch of state government, where she’s stayed. From 1989 to 1995, Cobra was a special assistant in the Department of Agriculture, and from 1995 to 2003 she served as a policy advisor to former Gov. John Kitzhaber during his first administration.

When former Gov. Ted Kulongoski took office in 2003, he appointed Cobra as director of ODA, promoting Oregon goods to regional, domestic and international markets.

“Oregon agriculture is very diverse, which is a strength we have, but it also brings a lot of challenges,” Cobra said.

Looking ahead, Cobra said Oregon still needs to find ways for agriculture to coexist, including genetically engineered versus organic crops. Climate change has also reduced snowpack across the state, which Cobra said has raised alarm about water supply and quality for farms.

“Having water for agriculture is going to be a high priority, without diminishing water quality,” she said.

ODA’s deputy director, Lisa Charpiloz Hanson, will serve as interim director starting Oct. 1, until a successor to Cobra is appointed. Meanwhile, a number of industry groups released statements Wednesday wishing Cobra well and lamenting her loss to the department.

“I had the pleasure of serving on the Board of Agriculture for four years under Katy Cobra,” said Jerome Rosa, executive director for the Oregon Cattlemen’s Association. “Katy had great marketing abilities, organizing many trade missions benefiting commodities in Oregon. She was always accessible with an open door policy that we greatly appreciated.”

In an interview with the *Capital Press*, Dave Dillon, executive vice president of the Oregon Farm Bureau, said Cobra was a successful director because she understood the industry, collaborated with producers and kept the department from being politicized.

Ivan Maluski, policy director for Friends of Family Farmers, said they are looking forward to working with Gov. Brown and her staff on the search for a new ODA director.

“While we have not always agreed with Cobra’s decisions or the stances of the Oregon Department of Agriculture during her tenure, we’ve appreciated being able to raise issues of importance to sustainable, family-scale farmers in Oregon and wish her well in this new position,” Maluski said.

Cobra takes over for George Naughton, who has been the interim director of the Department of Administrative Services since March 2015. Naughton was appointed interim director when Michael Jordan, the chief operating officer under former Gov. John Kitzhaber, announced his resignation, effective April 1 of that year.

In a prepared statement, Gov. Brown said Cobra has a proven track record of leadership and is “committed to making government work better for all Oregonians.”

Cobra said the governor has already identified a number of priorities they will address together, including training and development for department heads to better communicate more complex issues with the public.

Despite living in Salem, Cobra said she visits Pendleton regularly, and her friends and neighbors are not shy about telling her what isn’t working in state government.

“We need to think about how we connect with Oregonians in a different way so we don’t have that level of mistrust,” Cobra said.

The last year has been a whirlwind for Cobra. She was diagnosed with breast cancer last October, and has undergone several rounds of treatment on the road to recovery. While initially reluctant to leave the ODA, Cobra said she has been blessed in her career and looks forward to another opportunity.

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