

HERMISTON

Police close case on teen's death without charges

By PHIL WRIGHT
East Oregonian

Hermiston Police Chief Jason Edmiston said his department wrapped up its investigation into the death of 15-year-old Cesar Roque.

"As of right now," Edmiston said, "based on our investigation to date, we do not anticipate any kind of criminal charges being filed against anyone."

Roque was a sophomore at Hermiston High School. He died Sunday, Nov. 21 from an alcohol overdose, according preliminary findings.

Edmiston said the police investigation revealed Roque "provided himself the alcohol," then went to a friend's house and consumed it. Afterward, he was, for the most part, alone and sleeping.

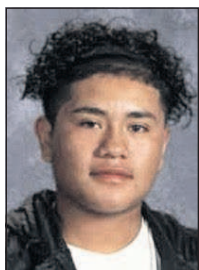
The adults in the home were unaware Roque was there, he said, and a couple of his friends checked on

him while he slept but did not suspect any trouble. A parent of one friend found Roque and called 9-1-1. Edmiston said, but the discovery came too late.

Dr. Larry Lewman, deputy state medical examiner, conducted an autopsy of the body Nov. 22 in Portland, and Hermiston police detective Robert Guerrero was present. Edmiston said Lewman in his report ruled Roque died from "acute alcohol intoxication," but results from blood toxicology tests have yet to come back.

Shy of those results showing other drugs or substances in Roque's system, or of someone coming forward with more information, Edmiston said, the investigation is closed.

"Based on all the statements," he said, "we don't believe there's any negligence on anybody else's part for the chain of events that took place."



Roque

BOARDMAN

City adopts chronic nuisance property law

By GEORGE PLAVEN
East Oregonian

Starting next month, Boardman police will have a new law on the books to deal with "chronic nuisance properties" in town.

The city council voted 5-1 on Tuesday to adopt Ordinance 3-2016, imposing fines and possible eviction if three or more nuisance activities are documented by police within 90 days.

"Nuisance activities" may include a host of crimes, such as arson, trespassing, disorderly conduct, illegal gambling and drug offenses. The ordinance gives police chief Rick Stokoe authority to deem a property in violation of the law, and refer the case to the city attorney.

If the court deems the property to be a chronic nuisance, it could be closed and vacated for at least 30 days and up to one year. Both landlords and renters could also be fined \$100

per day for each additional violation after authorities have declared a chronic nuisance.

Stokoe previously said the ordinance is similar to others across the state, and he would attempt to meet with property owners to abate the problem before turning to the courts. Councilor David Jones, who owns Frontier Court mobile home park, was the lone vote against the ordinance, which he said was written too broadly.

The law gives Stokoe too much power with not enough oversight, Jones said, and might actually discourage people from calling police to report a crime, if they face possible eviction.

"I thought we could do better," he said.

Councilor Brandon Hammond was absent from Tuesday's meeting. The ordinance will take effect Jan. 6.

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HERMISTON

Extended navigation lock outage begins Monday

East Oregonian

All navigation locks on the lower Columbia and Snake rivers will be out of service for 14 weeks beginning Monday, as the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers conducts extensive maintenance.

The closure was announced in May 2015, and will affect 359 miles of river from Portland to Lewiston, Idaho.

"Aging infrastructure sometimes requires extensive, non-routine repairs and improvements that cannot be completed within the traditional two-week annual routine maintenance outages,"

said Hal Thomas, navigation business line manager for the Army Corps of Engineers Walla Walla District. "This work will improve the long-term functionality and safety of these locks, as well as the overall reliability of the Columbia-Snake river navigation system as a whole."

Extended closures are unusual, Thomas said, and carefully coordinated between districts and industry. Recreational boaters, meanwhile, can choose from more than 50 shoreline launches managed by the Corps. For more information, visit www.nww.usace.army.mil.

HERMISTON

'Rich tapestry' of people

Cultural effectiveness conference celebrates diversity of region

By JADE MCDOWELL
East Oregonian

Employees of various educational and social service agencies filled the Eastern Oregon Trade and Event Center on Friday for a conference on creating cultural equity.

Umatilla Morrow County Head Start director Maureen McGrath said the day-long conference, titled Celebrating Cultural Effectiveness, highlighted the "beautiful rich tapestry" of diversity in the region.

To get participants thinking about their own culture, the day started with each table answering questions about participants' ethnic heritage, childhood traditions and what "diversity" looked like in their hometowns.

Bits and pieces of conversation that could be heard throughout the room revealed a variety of backgrounds, with participants talking about everything from celebrating Kwanzaa to eating sauerkraut for Thanksgiving.

"I always felt stuck between two worlds because my parents are from Mexico but I was raised in the United States," one woman told her table.

Throughout the day speakers shared their own backgrounds with the crowd of more than 300.

Poet Jordan Chaney told of the day in first grade, sitting in the tiny room he shared with his mother and brothers in the projects, when his mother handed him a spoon and told him to eat his cereal. He looked at the burn marks on the back — evidence of yet another drug binge by his mother and her boyfriend — and told her he wanted to go live with his teacher.

"It was because my teacher was the only functioning adult I knew," he said. "She had a job and a car."

While his older brother turned to crime and drugs, Chaney turned to poetry to express the difficulties of living a poverty-stricken life. By his sophomore year he was a teenage father



Staff photo by Jade McDowell

Members of the Pyramid Lake Paiute/Colville Tribe and participants in the Celebrating Cultural Effectiveness conference dance together in Hermiston on Friday.

living in a drug house and working two jobs, but he also had a 3.7 GPA and perfect attendance.

He told attendees that it was important for them to realize that some students or clients they worked with were struggling against immense difficulties at home but felt they couldn't confide in anyone because Child Protective Services might come and split up their family.

Keynote speaker Dr. Raymond Reyes, a professor at Gonzaga University, said culture is a mix of biology and biography. He said even in a group of people born into the same demographics — a room of straight white women, for example — there is always going to be enough difference in life experience for each to picture something slightly different if he said a word like "dog" or "road."

"Every human encounter is a cultural encounter," he said.

Some of those cultural differences might be more obvious than others, causing people to feel unsure, confused or nervous. Reyes led the group in a discussion of how to handle such situations. They agreed it was important to do research ahead of time where possible,

to observe protocols being followed and to ask questions when needed.

In a list of skills most important for successfully handling multicultural situations, Reyes said 50 intercultural experts ranked "to be aware of one's own culture" and "to be aware of one's own limitations" as the two most important.

"If you do that work all the other things begin to fall into place," he said.

In addition to speakers, the conference also featured foods from different cultures, a segment on celebrating culture through dance with members of the Pyramid Lake Paiute/Colville Tribe, time for self-reflection and a hands-on activity that encouraged groups to draw comic strips about cultural experiences they had in the last year.

Sponsors of the conference were Blue Mountain Early Learning Hub, Umatilla Morrow County Head Start, InterMountain Education Service District, Department of Human Services and Greater Oregon Behavioral Health Inc.

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HERMISTON

Work on EOTEC continues through snow

By JADE MCDOWELL
East Oregonian

A six-inch layer of snow did not keep contractors from working on the Eastern Oregon Trade and Event Center Friday.

It didn't keep the EOTEC board from meeting Friday morning, either.

Carl Hendon, CFO of Hendon Construction, told the board if the temperature doesn't rise above freezing for weeks at a time, it could delay work on the rodeo arena. But "as of now it has not slowed us down." Later that morning workers could be seen moving equipment around the 12-foot concrete walls that were recently erected on the site.

"We're still on schedule, believe it or not," Hendon said.

Meanwhile John Eckhardt, project manager for Knerr Construction, said the company's latest schedule shows work putting up the barns should start on Jan. 30 and be complete by July 14. He said the snow might keep the company from getting the fencing complete before Christmas as planned. McLaughlin Landscaping of Pendleton was the low bidder on the landscaping package, and Knerr Construction is releasing bid packages for other subcontractors soon.

On the operations side, board chair Byron Smith noted that EOTEC administrative assistant Cyndie Driscoll was hired by the county to coordinate spon-



Staff photo by Jade McDowell

Work on the rodeo arena at the Eastern Oregon Trade and Event Center continued Friday despite the snow.

sorships and activities for the Umatilla County Fair. He said he and business manager Heather Cannell were putting together a job listing seeking someone to replace Driscoll. They are also looking for a company willing to handle maintenance for EOTEC on a contract basis.

The board agreed to a request by Umatilla County emergency manager Tom Roberts, Hermiston School District operations manager Mike Kay, members of law enforcement and others who went through a recent FEMA training to form a committee to put together a safety plan for EOTEC.

The committee will look at where public address systems and security cameras should go, plan evacuation routes and put together plans for using EOTEC in emergency situations such as reunification of students and parents after a school crisis.

Board member Dan

Dorran said he would work with rodeo board member David Bothum to get together a plan for signs within the next couple of weeks so that the banners currently marking EOTEC can be replaced with something more permanent.

"The stuff out there is getting rattier every day and it needs torn down," Dorran said.

Smith told the board that the Rotary Club has approached him about providing volunteer labor for

landscaping around the event center. Board members noted that the Bureau of Labor and Industries won't allow volunteer construction labor on a project paid for by state and federal funds, but said certain things like planting trees around the already-finished event center might be considered separate from construction.

Board member Don Miller said that just because volunteers can't be actively helping with construction right now, it doesn't mean they can't be used in other ways now or after construction is complete. He said groups just need to work with the board to make sure they are helping in a legal way.

"We don't want the message out there that we can't use volunteers," he said. "I think we can."

On Friday the board also heard from Rick Stoddard of Barnett & Moro, who said that EOTEC had a clean audit.

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