

# EAST OREGONIAN

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## HERMISTON Police to add arson detective in revamp

By JAYATI RAMAKRISHNAN  
East Oregonian

The Hermiston Police Department will add an arson detective and a new school resource officer as part of a restructuring plan in 2017.

The changes will stem from new needs within the department, as well as the retiring of a long-time employee.

Captain Darryl Johnson, with the department since 1997, will retire June 2, creating an opening in the department.

“Ultimately, we’ll need to backfill that position,” said Hermiston police chief Jason Edmiston. “I think it’s a good sign if an agency is healthy enough to fill a position from within. In early January I’ll be naming the new captain, and it will more than likely come from the current sergeant corps.”

Once that happens, Edmiston said he will also need to fill a sergeant position.

The changes will also include several new positions within the department,

See POLICE/8A

## UmCo gets tough with state over crime lab

By PHIL WRIGHT  
East Oregonian

Umatilla County Board of Commissioners entered the fight to keep the Oregon State Police crime lab in Pendleton.

Gov. Kate Brown proposed closing Eastern Oregon’s only Forensic Services Division facility and sending its six employees to other labs as a cost-cutting measure in the next biennium. County commissioners at their public meeting Wednesday approved a resolution opposing the closure.

The resolution notes shutting down the Pendleton lab would save the state all of \$1.5 million while the closest lab would be in Clackamas, 212 miles away.

District Attorney Dan Primus told commissioners he appreciated their move and said the issue is of “great significance” to his office and law enforcement throughout the region. He said the local crime lab provides crucial expertise and experience.

“Unfortunately, we do have a fair

See LAB/8A

“Don’t let anything or anyone keep you from achieving your goals. If you have a setback, just get up and keep plugging away.” — Art Mota, BMCC women’s soccer coach



Art Mota got a running start to his first season as BMCC women’s soccer coach and battled struggles both on and off the field. Staff photo by E.J. Harris

## MOVING GOALPOSTS

BMCC soccer coach, a former gang member, looks forward after disheartening first season for new program

By KATHY ANEY  
East Oregonian

Soccer coach Art Mota can tell you that life isn’t always easy — and he’s got more street cred than most.

Mota, coach of the first-ever women’s soccer team at Blue Mountain Community College, is a former California gang member and high school dropout. From that low rung on life’s ladder, he started climbing back up.

The teenager left gang life and traveled to Mexico where he met his wife, Alicia. The couple raised two children while Art got his GED, earned his bachelor’s and master’s degrees, started a business and eventually coached soccer at the college level. Two years ago, he was named Northwest Athletic Conference Coach of the Year while coaching for Chemeketa Community College. Mota was riding high as he accepted a job at BMCC.

But sometimes the goalposts get moved. Mota’s first season at BMCC provided a brutal lesson in team dynamics and also brought tragedy in his personal life.

Mota, also a student success coach at the Hermiston campus, often shares his personal story with students. He tells them he got straight A’s at his Fresno school until



BMCC goalie Jessica Adams punches the ball away from Wenatchee Valley’s True Downey in the Timberwolves’ 9-0 loss to the Knights in Pendleton on Oct. 26. Staff photo by E.J. Harris

seventh grade when he veered sharply off course.

“I started hanging out with the wrong crowd,” Mota said. “My grades took a

dive. By the time I was a sophomore, I dropped out. I am a high school dropout.”

See MOTA/8A



One wall is charred and the others have been stripped away in the area where a fire started in the Columbia Court Club on June 20. Staff photo by Jade McDowell

## HERMISTON

## Insurance negotiations hamper club rebuild

Health, fitness business  
closed since June fire

By JADE MCDOWELL  
East Oregonian

Six months after a fire at the Columbia Court Club the owners are still caught in a long, slow disagreement between their insurance company and the state building codes division.

Steve Watkins said he understands the community’s disappointment in losing its only indoor pool and track for so long,

and he would love nothing better than to re-open.

“Nobody’s more frustrated than us,” he said.

Not only is the damage to the Hermiston club extensive, but the Watkins can’t repair or rebuild until Hanover Insurance settles their claim. The problem is that the state says it won’t issue building permits unless everything is brought up to current codes, including expensive updates such as elevators and installation of a fire suppression

See CLUB/8A

