

OUR NEW NEIGHBORS

# Downtown Association manager wowed by history, hospitality

By **GEORGE PLAVEN**  
East Oregonian

From the colorful hills to the friendly faces, Molly Turner said she hit the jackpot when she moved to Pendleton earlier this year.

"Pendleton is so nice," said Turner, 22, who arrived in September. "The people here are so great. I can't get over it."

As program manager for the Pendleton Downtown Association, it is Turner's job to engage with residents and find ways to promote the city's downtown area. That includes new community events, such as the Old Fashioned Holiday Stroll, which Turner envisioned and launched Dec. 10.

The stroll was successful in its first year — Turner said 939 people responded on Facebook alone, and downtown business reported increases in sales and traffic. For example, MaySon's Old Fashioned General Store saw a 70 percent increase in customers compared to the same day a year ago, according to Turner.

Looking ahead, Turner said the Downtown Association may also consider an art walk to showcase local artists, and is working with several other organizations to redevelop the Webb's Cold Storage Property on South Main.

The goal, Turner said, is to get people excited about visiting downtown. What she needs now is input and ideas about what the community really wants to see.

"I'm trying very hard to be cognizant of getting feedback from people who have been here a lot longer than I have," Turner said.

Turner is a native Oregonian but hails from the Willamette Valley, having grown up in Corvallis. She graduated from the Clark Honors College at the University of Oregon last spring, with a double major in anthropology and Spanish, and a minor in planning, public policy and management.



Staff photo by George Plaven

Molly Turner moved to Pendleton in September, and is the program manager for the Pendleton Downtown Association.

**"I think I have the best job in the world. I really love Pendleton. I would like to stay here for a while."**

— **Molly Turner**, program manager for the Pendleton Downtown Association

During her senior year, Turner wrote her thesis on rural food systems, which is how she came into contact with Titus Tomlinson. Tomlinson is the coordinator for Resource Assistance for Rural Environments, or RARE, an AmeriCorps program administered through the university's Community Service Center.

Turner was won over by the program, which places graduate-level participants in communities across the state to help with things like food security, natural hazard planning, land use planning and economic development. Pendleton was Turner's top choice from the beginning.

"I heard great things about Pendleton and Eastern Oregon," she said.

"The more I learned about Pendleton, the more fun it seemed."

The nonprofit Downtown Association hired Turner to manage the organization, and she arrived in town Sept. 1. Her first week of work coincided with the annual Pendleton Round-Up, giving her an immediate crash course in the city's Old West culture and lifestyle.

"It was really exciting," she said. "It was a really great introduction to the history of Pendleton."

Turner already has her sights on staying. Though RARE placements run for just 11 months, Turner said she is working with the Downtown Association's board of directors to draft a new contract that would

keep her on board after her AmeriCorps term ends next July.

"I think I have the best job in the world," she said. "I really love Pendleton. I would like to stay here for a while."

Turner said she has been amazed by Pendleton's vibrant art and music scene, and warm hospitality. Strangers smile and say hello to her on the street, which she said has made her feel welcome in her new home.

"I'm really excited to be here," she said. "I feel very fortunate for having ended up where I am, doing what I am."

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**HERMISTON**

# New bus system starts Tuesday

East Oregonian

Hermiston's new bus system is ready to pick up its first passengers on Tuesday.

The HART — short for Hermiston Area Regional Transit — will run around the city from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday through Friday. It is free and open to anyone.

The route has 33 stops and is scheduled to stop at each four times during the day. Stops include the Stafford Hansell Government Building, Good Shepherd Medical Center, Wal-Mart, Safeway and downtown. Passengers can also connect to the Hermiston Hopper, which runs between Hermiston, Pendleton, Umatilla, Stanfield and Irrigon.

The full schedule can be found on the city of Hermiston's website at [hermiston.or.us](http://hermiston.or.us).

The system is run by Kayak Public Transit in partnership with the city of

Hermiston. It will be paid for by a combination of city general fund dollars and grants.

The HART will not replace the senior and disabled taxi ticket program that the city also runs.

Assistant city manager Mark Morgan said the city views the schedule and route as a "starting point." The public transit committee will meet with Kayak Public Transit quarterly to make adjustments based on customer feedback.

"Frankly, public transit is expensive, and this new service represents a major commitment of additional annual funding toward public transit by the city council," Morgan said in a news release. "So please understand that we view these operating hours as a starting point for a public transit system that we hope will grow in to a long-term sustainable service for the community well in to the future."

**PENDLETON**

# New councilors ready to expand economy, housing and infrastructure in 2017

By **ANTONIO SIERRA**  
East Oregonian

Although they've yet to be sworn in, the three newcomers to the Pendleton City Council are already unified in what they want to achieve in 2017.

And presumably 2018 and 2019 as well.

The council is set to adopt four goals for the 2017-2019 biennium at its Tuesday meeting, and mayor-elect John Turner and councilors-elect Scott Fairley and Dale Primmer want to spend the rest of the year focusing on them.

After he was elected in May, Turner and a committee drafted a list of 12 goals and solicited them to the public, eventually prioritizing a top four.

Those four goals are "providing a stable source of funding for infrastructure," "expanding the economy," "developing quality commercial, industrial, and residential properties," and "more housing for all levels of income."

According to Turner, those goals are inextricably linked and will require continued focus from the council.

While these are long-term goals, Turner said the council can make progress toward them by taking a hard look at the budget and determining how the city's money is being used to meet the goals.

The 2017-2018 budget will be considered and adopted in the spring.

Fairley echoed Turner's comments, saying that many of the points made in his campaign align with the goals the council is set to adopt.

Fairley said it was important that the council stick to these goals because it would help the city stay accountable to what the

public wanted to see.

Primmer said it's clear that the general fund, the city's only discretionary fund, is limited, with much of it going to public safety services like the fire department and police.

The need to grow the general fund is chicken-and-the-egg scenario.

In order to grow the general fund to put more money toward those goals, the city would need to grow the tax base, which would require things like "expanding the economy" and "more housing for all levels of income."

Before they can attempt to achieve any of the goals, the new members of the council will have to be sworn in first.

Turner, Fairley and Primmer will all be sworn in Tuesday, as well as councilors Becky Marks and Paul Chalmers, who won new terms.

The council has a light agenda that is centered around old city hall, which was heavily damaged in a fire last year.

Because the damage hasn't been significantly repaired for more than a year, old city hall is subject to the city's nuisance ordinance, which could mean hundreds to thousands of dollars in fines for the family that owns the historic building.

The council staved off those penalties and gave the family an extension in October with the expectation that the building would have a new roof by the first of the year.

With the roof incomplete, the council will consider whether to provide another extension or begin fixing the family.

The council will meet at 7 p.m. at the council chambers in city hall, 500 S.W. Dorion Ave.

**HERMISTON**

# Pedro named state chamber executive of the year

East Oregonian

Greater Hermiston Area Chamber of Commerce director Debbie Pedro has been named the 2016 Chamber Executive of the Year by the Oregon State Chamber of Commerce.

Pedro was honored at a conference in October, according to a news release from the state chamber. She was recognized for her leadership in helping the chamber consistently meet or exceed its membership goals and for keeping "members well served and staff performing at peak levels."

Pedro has served as the Hermiston chamber's director for 10 years and worked for the chamber for an additional six years before that. In 2014 she served as the board chair for the state chamber of commerce.

The Oregon State Chamber of Commerce provides support and assistance to local chambers and represents their interests to the state government.

**SUBMIT COMMUNITY NEWS**

Submit information to: [community@eastoregonian.com](mailto:community@eastoregonian.com) or drop off to the attention of Tammy Malgesini at 333 E. Main St., Hermiston or Renee Struthers at 211 S.E. Byers Ave., Pendleton. Call 541-564-4539 or 541-966-0818 with questions.

**HERMISTON**

# Two injured in three-car crash

By **JAYATI RAMAKRISHNAN**  
East Oregonian

Three cars collided at the intersection of West Orchard Avenue and South First Street in Hermiston shortly before 3 p.m. Friday, injuring two people and causing major damage to two of the vehicles.

The driver and a passenger in a Honda Civic were taken to Good Shepherd Hospital complaining of neck pain.

According to Hermiston police, the black Honda Civic was northbound on South First Street at Orchard Avenue and the driver thought the intersection was a four-way stop. The driver entered the intersection and failed to yield to the silver Chevy Malibu traveling west on Orchard Avenue. The Honda collided with the Malibu, and then a maroon Kia Sorento traveling south on First Street. The Malibu was pushed several yards in front of the other two, while the Civic and Sorento came to rest nose-to-nose.

All vehicles were towed



Staff photo by Jayati Ramakrishnan

A Honda Civic and a Kia Sorento were two of the three cars involved in a collision at West Orchard Avenue and South First Street in Hermiston Friday afternoon. The driver and a passenger in the civic were taken to Good Shepherd Hospital, complaining of neck pain.

from the scene. Police did not release the names of the people involved in the accident.

"I was coming at the green light from that way, when another car pushed me to the right," said Cecilia Nuevo, who was driving the Malibu. Nuevo's car had damage, including a crumpled hood and one headlight smashed. The Civic was severely

dentured on its passenger side, and all the airbags inside the car were deployed. The Sorento appeared to have less external damage.

Several emergency vehicles were at the scene, including three Hermiston police vehicles, one ambulance and one fire engine.

Contact Jayati at [jramakrishnan@eastoregonian.com](mailto:jramakrishnan@eastoregonian.com)

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