



Photo contributed by Amy Ashton-Williams

Ruth Silva was recently honored by her coworkers during a luncheon at Umatilla County Human Services.

## SILVA: Has a knack for connecting with clients, who are not always easy to relate to

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ciates their willingness to cut her some slack, she would rather be in the office doing her job than sitting at home.

"I don't want special treatment because I have cancer, and they know that's who I am," she said.

Amy Ashton-Williams, director of Umatilla County Human Services, said Silva is an "integral part of our team" who keeps the agency running.

"Despite the treacherous treatment regiment and many complications and surgeries, Ruth shows up to work daily, ready and excited to serve our clients," she wrote in an email.

She said the agency's clients are not always well understood or easy to relate to, but Silva has a knack for connecting with them.

Clients are referred for drug and alcohol addictions, gambling addictions, domestic violence and anger management issues, driving while intoxicated or other problems. Silva said her own sister has gotten clean after struggling with a meth addiction, and that personal connection makes it easier for her not to be judgmental or harsh.

"She told me they don't get to control the drugs. Once they start using, the drugs control them," Silva said.

She said sometimes people come in angry or convinced that their problems are everyone's fault but their own. She has learned to respond to them with humor and kindness. She always tries to remember everyone's name after the first visit so she can greet them the next time they come in.

**"People tell me, 'I couldn't do that. I say, 'Yes you could. If you have to, you do.'"**

— Ruth Silva, about handling treatments and complications

Silva said it's really rewarding to see the changes that can happen when clients get help and a second chance. Sometimes people get so comfortable with confiding in her that she has to remind them she's not a licensed counselor.

She does all of that while battling stage three cancer. It's been full of challenges, from the severe fatigue to the loss of hair that necessitated a lot of beanies and hats this winter.

"I've got the collection," she said. "I see bald guys and I ask them, 'Doesn't your head get cold?' They say, 'No, you get used to it.' I'm not used to it."

She said she has received lots of support from family and friends and coworkers, something she has been very grateful for as she has battled the effects of her illness and the chemotherapy. Her seven grandchildren are her biggest inspiration for keeping up the fight.

"People tell me, 'I couldn't do that,'" she said about handling treatments and complications. "I say, 'Yes you could. If you have to, you do.'"

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## CASCADIA: Will take one to three years to restore water, sewer services to coastal cities

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had working electricity. Where utilities had been restored "Help Wanted" signs decorated every business window, the newspaper reported, and restaurants served limited menus.

At a morgue near Baton Rouge, 86 bodies remained unidentified. More than 2,000 people were still listed as missing. Some of them had turned up safe without relatives notifying the government, but authorities estimated there were still hundreds of bodies that had been washed out to sea or were still buried in rubble. Only twenty of the city's 128 public schools were operational, and more than 48,000 families were living in FEMA trailers.

Some families never returned to Louisiana.

Umatilla County commissioner Larry Givens said he visited New Orleans three years ago and saw hundreds of homes still sitting empty and rotting. Some homeowners died, while others gave up after being defrauded by fake contractors who took their money to rebuild and disappeared. Some found new jobs and new lives in places like Houston, which took in an estimated 250,000 refugees.

"Those people left and for every week they were gone, that many more said 'Forget it,'" Givens said.

He said in the event of a Cascadia earthquake, Umatilla County would also likely have people who decided to stay in Eastern Oregon after fleeing the west side of the state. The state's Cascadia Subduction Zone Catastrophic Response plan notes that east side hotels, motels, empty buildings, foreclosed housing and other available spaces will all be used for temporary housing.

Even if refugees wanted to return home, the state estimates it will take six months to a year to restore water and sewer services to the valley and one to three years to restore it to the coastal cities.

Recovery from Hurricane Katrina was hindered in part by the confusing patchwork of overlapping jurisdictions that allowed agencies to pass the buck or caused them to duplicate efforts.

### Preparing your business for the earthquake

In the event of a disaster, businesses can get back on their feet more quickly if they are prepared. The Oregon Office of Emergency Management's business preparedness website and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce's Small Business Recover Guide have a comprehensive set of resources for businesses, including the following suggestions:

1. Have an emergency plan and supplies such as flashlights and first aid kits in place for if the disaster hits during the work day. Make sure your employees know what the plan is and where the supplies are.
2. Have a plan for communication between employees and consider purchasing satellite phones or walkie talkies for managers.
3. Seismically safeguard your office or store and secure important inventory.
4. Invest in off-site backup services for your company website and digital records you don't want to lose. Also have paper copies of employee contacts, insurance and other important information on hand.
5. Learn how your suppliers would operate during an emergency so that you can make sure your plans fit with theirs, and identify backup suppliers from out of state if needed.
6. Discuss partnerships to pool resources with other small businesses in the community in the event of a disaster.
7. Once disaster hits, document damage carefully and file insurance claims.

Tom Hebert, a public policy consultant living on the Umatilla Indian Reservation, wrote a policy paper afterward proposing that the federal government create regional development authorities to coordinate a single response to natural disasters. Their locations around the country would be based on likely disaster scenarios.

"Cascadia would play into the scientifically placed, prepositioned authorities," Hebert said.

For now, however, the state's emergency plan for Cascadia describes the undertaking of rebuilding utilities and other infrastructure with this alphabet soup: "Deploy Federal and State teams to evaluate damage and establish priorities: OEM and FEMA Public Assistance Program and Technical Assistance Contractor staff. ODOT and FHWA (roads and bridges), ORWARN, DEQ, U.S. EPA (water and wastewater facilities), and PUC, ODOE, USACE (power, levees, and water control facilities)."

Joe Franell, chairman of the Oregon Broadband Advisory Council, said the recovery phase will take place in a situation where the internet, and by exten-

sion banking services like debit cards, will be down all over the state for "months."

"For some period of time we will be a cash and barter society," he said.

Franell said how quickly the shelves are restocked in stores will vary on a business by business basis, depending on their preparedness and how their suppliers were affected.

In such conditions it will be tempting for Umatilla County residents to become refugees themselves, and ride out the first six months or so with family in another state. However, fuel for vehicles and generators are not expected to be available to regular citizens for "months and months," so if a person's gas tank was almost empty when the earthquake hit they might not be going anywhere.

The best thing people can do, then, Franell said, is work to be personally prepared and to help their communities and neighborhoods prepare to get through Cascadia together.

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