

# DESERT ROSE: Estle working on setting up a transitional house on Hermiston Avenue

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tough sometimes.” Donald and Penny Self have volunteered at Desert Rose for the last few years. Donald serves food, hands out donations, and helps with anything that needs to get done.

“I’m 81 years old, and I’m here at least 36 hours a week,” he said. “I drive people to rehab in Portland. We feed and give out food packages to families.”

While Morris is back on his feet and busy helping others through Desert Rose, many people are still struggling — not just with addiction, but with trying to be a part of society. Estle aims to make that change a little easier.

“People with felonies — it’s not easy for them to get jobs,” Estle said. “It’s one turn down after another.”

Estle said Desert Rose tries to help people get back on their feet, and not focus on the things they’ve done in the past. He points to a framed piece of art above his desk — an intricate, realistic pencil-drawn portrait of him and his wife.

“A lot of these guys have great talents, but they get involved with something,” he said. “Just because you have a bad time in your life doesn’t mean you can’t accomplish things. It’s about getting somebody to trust you.”

Estle said while he hasn’t experienced some of the struggles many of his congregation have, he had his own challenges.

“I received Christ when I was 14 years old,” he said. “I had a real rough road. I think I fought with God a lot — there were a lot of secular things I wanted to accomplish.”

He said he finally realized what he wanted to be doing three years ago, when he was laying tile floors for the building that now houses Desert Rose. He said that while setting the floor, he began praying, and soon realized what he should do.

Desert Rose has a couple of projects in the works to help people get the experience they need. One is the vacant building next to the church, which the church is now renting and hopes to turn into a functioning restaurant. The spot has housed a handful of restaurants in the past few years, but none have stayed long.

“We’re opening a restaurant with the idea of helping some of the people who have had a hard time getting jobs,” Estle said. He added that he hopes the restaurant will be able to offer a free menu once a month.

“So people who normally don’t get to take their families out for dinner get to enjoy that part of life,” he said.

Estle is also working on



Jason Estle plates up food for guest Joseph Day on Thursday at Desert Rose Ministries in Hermiston. Staff photo by E.J. Harris



Luis Montes and Jason Estle looks for baby clothes for an expecting couple that stopped by Desert Rose Ministries on Thursday in Hermiston. Staff photo by E.J. Harris

setting up a transitional house on Hermiston Avenue near Mike’s Market.

“The idea is that they can come here and have a clean slate,” he said. Often, he said, people coming out of treatment facilities or jail are doing well. But if they return to an environment in which they had problems before, it can be easy to fall back into that cycle.

“In a transitional house, people can work on getting jobs or doing school,” he said.

While Estle doesn’t have a specific date either of those facilities will be operational, he hopes it will be some time within the next year.

Part of the issue includes securing funding to make those projects happen. Desert Rose runs entirely on community donations — from food to sleeping bags and clothing.

“I’d like to be able to say we’re self-sufficient, but right now we’re looking for donations,” he said.

Desert Rose has also been holding community barbecues, in parts of the community that are often forgotten or don’t get much positive attention.

“There are sections of our community who are scared to even be here — we wanted to go to those communities and have a barbecue, just because,” Estle said.

Estle said while many people start out at Desert

Rose doing court-ordered community service, they often stay even after they’re done.

“They feel comfortable enough to come talk about their history, addiction, their life,” Estle said.

Though Desert Rose is a church, it’s not a requirement for those who come there to be religious. But many of them are.

“You don’t have to believe to belong,” says a sign on Estle’s desk. “But if you belong, we believe you will believe.”

Estle said he tries to use his faith as a guiding principle for how he handles tough situations. One thing he’s struggled with is how to handle people who continue to use drugs after they come to Desert Rose.

“I told a guy who had drugs he needed to leave,” Estle said. “He did, and he hasn’t been back since.”

Estle said he wishes he’d been more accepting of the man in that situation.

“I think I could have seen a difference in his life — and now I don’t get to see that difference,” he said. “If we shun people and push them away, how can we expect them to change?”

Volunteer Jim Robinson said part of the challenge working with the people who come to Desert Rose out of rehab, or who are homeless,

is getting them to trust others.

“People want to learn to trust again,” he said. “There’s a certain amount of survival they go through when they come out of jail, or when they get clean.”

He recalls this winter, one of the worst in years. Many of the people coming to Desert Rose during the day would go to the Warming Station at night. When that closed, many didn’t have a place to go. Desert Rose allowed people to sleep under a 53-foot trailer they have behind the building, but were soon told by police they weren’t allowed to have people spend the night there.

“That’s something we’re trying to figure out,” Estle said. “Where can we have these guys go that’s a safe place? We need to put our heads together and come up with ideas.”

Outside Desert Rose, the huge trailer sits filled with donations of clothing and blankets, and other supplies the ministry donates to those who come looking for help. Inside, a corner of the room is packed with canned and non-perishable food, and water.

Some people just come in to get supplies and then leave, but others stay a while — talking with their friends, discussing religion or just sitting quietly.

Estle enjoys seeing that.

“I love the table discussions,” he said. “Whether I’m sitting at the table or just listening, I love hearing that.”

He considers himself lucky to be in that position.

“I get to see these people’s lives, what they’re supposed to be — not what they have been.”

Desert Rose will be holding another barbecue on Saturday, starting around 11 a.m., on the corner of East Fifth and Main streets.

Contact Jayati Ramakrishnan at 541-564-4534 or jramakrishnan@eastoregonian.com

# GOP health bill in shambles, House begins two-week break

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Republican health care bill remained in shambles Thursday as House leaders threw up their hands and sent lawmakers home for a two-week recess. GOP chiefs announced a modest amendment to curb premium increases, but internal divisions still blocked their promised repeal of former President Barack Obama’s law.

“This brings us closer to the final agreement that we all want to achieve,” House Speaker Paul Ryan, R-Wis., said of the new amendment, flanked by about two dozen GOP lawmakers at a news briefing meant to project unity.

But in a sentiment echoed by other leaders, Ryan conceded “we have more work to do” over the “days and weeks ahead.” That underscored the longer timeline Republican leaders acknowledge they’ll need to resolve disputes between conservatives and moderates that blew up their legislation last month, dishing a mortifying defeat to Ryan and President Donald Trump.

Ominously, lawmakers from both ends of the party who’ve opposed the GOP legislation said Thursday’s revision wasn’t enough to turn them around. They included Rep. Mark Meadows, R-N.C., who leads the conservative House Freedom Caucus, a hotbed of opposition, and moderate GOP Rep. Leonard Lance of New Jersey.

“I favor making sure no one is denied coverage due to a pre-existing condition. So I doubt this would be enough,” said Lance.

Frustration over the bill’s dismal performance in Congress spilled out during a meeting Ryan and other House leaders attended late Wednesday at the White House, according to several Republicans who’d been told about the session.

White House chief of staff Reince Priebus and others expressed unhappiness that the legislation remained unfinished, and the fanfare accompanying the amendment introduced Thursday was a direct result of that meeting, the Republicans said.

# PINWHEELS: Umatilla County has the fifth lowest child abuse rate in the state

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The mural is similar to the one featured at the Guardian Care Center, and organizers hope to spread paintings and pinwheels to the Umatilla County Courthouse and other locations across Umatilla, Morrow and Union counties.

The organizers said the Pinwheels for Prevention campaign is meant to draw attention to an issue that’s serious both locally and throughout the state.

Remington said that in 2016, 200 children went through Guardian Care Center, which provides forensic interviews, medical evaluations and community education in support of child abuse prevention — a number that’s consistent with years past.

Remington said the Guardian Care Center serves children that have undergone physical, mental or sexual abuse or have witnessed a traumatic experience.

According to the 2015 Child Welfare Data Book, the Oregon Department of Human Service’s most recent set of data regarding child abuse, there were 10,402 child abuse victims in 2015. Of those victims, 46.6 percent were younger than 6 years old.

From 2013 to 2015, Umatilla County’s child abuse rate has gone down from 9.3 victims per 1,000 children in 2013 to 8.2 in 2015, good for the fifth lowest abuse rate in the state.

Morrow County has

trended in the opposite direction, rising from 6.3 victims per 1,000 children in 2013 to 13.7 in 2015. That represents a more middling figure in the state and lags far behind Baker County and its 31.4 victims per 1,000 children — the worst rate in Oregon.

As a part of the campaign, GOBHI will be promoting the Triple P Positive Parenting Program, a series of parenting classes new to the area.

Maranville said the point of Triple P is to move parents away from punitive measures. Material associated with the program encourages parents to “create a safe, interesting environment,” “have realistic expectations,” and “take care of yourself as a parent.”

“You can parent differently than your parents did,” Maranville said.

Richards added that Triple P is an attempt to make parents more authoritative in their discipline rather than authoritarian. More information on Triple P will be available at a St. Anthony health fair at the Pendleton Convention Center on Saturday.

Organizers also want to encourage people to come forward and report abuse. People can report child abuse anonymously to the Childhelp National Child Abuse Hotline, 1-800-422-4453.

Contact Antonio Sierra at asierra@eastoregonian.com or 541-966-0836.

# ZONE: Had to raise money to pay for the sign

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e-commerce zone will serve as a similar neutral location.

“We’re just trying to provide a small service,” he said.

Edmiston said the city was first approached with the idea by Bryan Miller, a Blue Mountain Community College student who leads the student honor society Phi Theta Kappa.

He said he was inspired to start something because he does a lot of buying and selling using Facebook and Craigslist.

“I’m huge and intimidating-looking, so I know how scared people are when I answer the door,” he said with a laugh. “I thought, ‘There’s got to be a better way.’”

Miller said he read about some towns in Florida and Texas that have safe zones for online transactions. He contacted the city of Hermiston in November, and said they were interested in the idea.

“I was actually really surprised,” he said. “We had to go through a lot of loopholes, but they were willing to do it. I was surprised and excited they saw it as a good



Hermiston and Boardman police have designated safe areas where people can conduct transactions they set up online. Staff photo by Jayati Ramakrishnan

thing.” Miller said he had to raise some money for the sign, which cost about \$50. By raffling off tickets to a Snoopy Dogg concert in the Tri-Cities, the club earned about \$150, the remainder of which they will use for future projects.

The city of Boardman also passed an ordinance last year designating their police station as an “online safe zone.”

“We know online purchases have become very popular,” said Boardman police chief Rick Stokoe. “Most people are a little

nervous about going to someone’s house or having someone come to theirs, so this is a neutral place.”

Stokoe said since they’ve implemented the safe zone, they haven’t had to step in for any disputes.

“For us, it’s not time-intensive,” he said. “If they come to us, and ask us to step in, we will, but otherwise, we’re just monitoring.”

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