

HERMISTON

Consul general talks U.S.-Mexico relations at Cinco de Mayo

By PHIL WRIGHT
East Oregonian

Francisco Maass Peña looked rather at home striding in Hermiston's Cinco de Mayo parade. It was all in a day's work.

Sunday marks 10 months since Peña stepped into the post of Mexico's consul general for Oregon. Saturday he donned the sash noting he was the parade's grand marshal. Jose Garcia, chair of Hermiston's Hispanic Advisory Committee, and Clara Beas-Fitzgerald, Hermiston city councilor, walked beside Peña as he led the parade the few blocks to Butte Park.

Hermiston Mayor Dave Drotzmann, Umatilla County Sheriff Terry Rowan and county commissioners Bill Elfering and George Murdock were key local luminaries who also participated in the celebration, which helped kick off the two-day celebration at Butte Park.

Hermiston Hispanic Advisory Committee member Mark Gomolski sent an invitation a few months ago asking Peña to come. Peña, gracious and diplomatic, said accepting provided him the opportunity to build more bridges with the local community.

The consul general handles vital services for around 400,000 Mexicans, from providing official documents, including passports, birth certificates and identification, to offering legal advice. The consulate's headquarters are in Portland, but the service area spans most of Oregon and three counties in southwest Washington (Oregon's most eastern counties fall under the Consulate of Mexico in Boise).

"As you can imagine, there's a lot of work," Peña said.

He talked up the office's "mobile consulate," which he said takes services right to migrant labor camps and rural parts of the state. And he said he is working toward increasing tourism between Oregon and Mexico.

Before taking on consul general, Peña worked for three years as Mexico's undersecretary of tourism. Plenty of people know about tourist hot spots like Cabo San Lucas and Cancun, he said, but Mexico has much more to offer. Likewise, he said, Mexican tourists would enjoy Oregon's natural beauty.



Francisco Maass Peña, Mexico's consul general for Oregon, speaks to a crowd gathered Saturday for the Hermiston Cinco de Mayo celebration at Butte Park.

Staff photo by Kathy Aney

But connectivity between Oregon and Mexico is a hurdle. Portland International Airport has one direct flight to Guadalajara. Peña said he wants to help find a way to have direct flights from Portland to Mexico City. The metropolis of 20 million is a hub, he said, for access to the rest of Mexico.

Peña took the main stage at Butte Park and delivered a short dedication in Spanish. After the events, he addressed the effects of the anti-immigrant climate in the U.S. on the consulate's work. He said there may be a culture of preparation emerging.

"I think this is an excellent moment for people to have their Mexican papers in order," he said, and to seek the consulate for help with "immigration diagnostics."

"I'm sure there are a lot of people with real possibilities for immigration, but they don't know it," Peña said, and the consulate can help them explore those options.

Garcia of the advisory committee said the consulate's services are invaluable to the area's Hispanic population. The office really serves as a "consultant" to the Mexican community, he said, even working with families in distress when loved ones face deportation.

Garcia also said Peña's participation in the local Cinco de Mayo event acts as a sign of reassurance at a time of rising anti-immigration sentiment and actions.

Peña also said whatever difference the governments of Mexico and the U.S. have, the two countries remain allies with deep economic bonds. The Office of the United States Trade Representative estimated the nation's goods and services trade with Mexico totaled \$579.7 billion in 2016.

"At the end," Peña said, "the links between Mexico and the United States are so, so, so, so strong."

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HERMISTON

Shooter in August confrontation sentenced to almost six years

East Oregonian

Eduardo Rodriguez Barriga, 26, was sentenced Monday to prison time and restitution fees to his victim, Daniel Carranza Lemus.

Rodriguez was charged with assault in the second degree, and two counts of unlawful use of a firearm after an August 24, 2016 incident. He has been sentenced to 70 months in prison and three years post-prison supervision, and is ordered to have no contact with the victim. Rodriguez will also have to pay \$1,407.20 to Lemus, and \$600 to the court — \$200 for each count.

In his hearing, Rodriguez admitted to firing a gun, the bullet from which hit Lemus in the leg. But he said he fired in self-defense,

thinking he was in danger of being shot.

Rodriguez and Lemus, who had been childhood friends, had argued over a woman that morning and had previously had arguments but had not been on speaking terms for several years.

The morning of the incident, Rodriguez said his girlfriend received a call from Lemus, after which Rodriguez told him not to call her. The two then ended up at Butte Park, with their cars parked next to each other. Rodriguez said he thought Lemus was rolling down his window, and thought he had a gun, so he picked up a gun he had on the floor of his vehicle and fired without aiming.

Further investigations revealed that Lemus did not have a gun.



Rodriguez

PENDLETON

Downtown association hires executive director

East Oregonian

In the span of about eight months, Molly Turner of the Pendleton Downtown Association has gone from intern to director.

According to a Saturday press release, the association has named Turner its first executive director.

A University of Oregon graduate, the association brought Turner to Pendleton as an intern from AmeriCorps' Resource Assistance for Rural Environments program in September, serving as the nonprofit's program manager.

"I am absolutely blown away by Pendleton," Turner said in a statement. "This area is gorgeous and I see a huge potential. I am eager to continue the work we have started and truly see an impact downtown."

Fred Bradbury, a downtown business owner and the president of the association, heaped praise on the nonprofit's only employee.

"Molly has been instrumental in creating new promotion events in the

Downtown Core, grant fund raising, and assisting the Board and PDA Members as we move forward on a wide array of design and economic projects," he said.

The association's operations are primarily funded through the Pendleton Development Commission, a city governing board that oversees the urban renewal district.

Although Turner signed a three-year contract, the commission agreed to pay \$55,000 for Turner's salary and other operational costs for only one year while encouraging the association to find an alternative source of funding.

In an interview Monday, Turner said the association was working toward identifying other sources of funding.

Turner will begin her new contract Aug. 1.

The Pendleton Downtown Association is a member of the Oregon Main Street program and a member organization dedicated to supporting the downtown area.



Turner

BRIEFLY

Pedestrian struck, taken to Pendleton hospital

PENDLETON — A man was struck by a Ford sedan and taken to the hospital Monday afternoon on Southwest Court Avenue near Oxford Suites.

According to Lt. Charles Byram with the Pendleton police, witnesses said the man stepped into the road. An ambulance took the victim to St. Anthony Hospital, Pendleton, but neither he or the driver were immediately identified.

Traffic was blocked on the road for about an hour.

Pendleton and Oregon State Police responded, and the case remains open.

Teachers honored this week in Hermiston

HERMISTON — At Monday's school board meeting, the Hermiston School District declared May 8 through 12 as Teacher Appreciation Week. The board encouraged students, parents and community members to thank teachers for their dedication to their jobs.

"Each of us can look back in our lives to see the influence of teachers who shaped and molded us," said superintendent Fred Maiocco. "Please take time to recognize their incredible work."

The Hermiston School District has about 314 licensed staff members, including classroom teachers, specialists, instructional coaches and librarians.



Pendleton police Monday afternoon investigate a vehicle versus pedestrian collision at Southwest Court Avenue near Oxford Suites.

Staff photo by Phil Wright

Barbara Ceniga to discuss Pioneer Relief Nursery

PENDLETON — Barbara Ceniga, executive director of Pioneer Relief Nursery, will share about the organization's mission at the upcoming Roundup Republican Women meeting.

Everyone is welcome to attend the no-host luncheon gathering. The meeting is Thursday at 11:45 a.m. at the Red Lion, 304 S.E. Nye Ave., Pendleton. The cost is \$11 for members and \$13 for non-members.

The relief nursery is dedicated to the prevention of child abuse and neglect. It provides families with support to help in creating safe and healthy environments to raise children.

Those planning to attend are asked to confirm by Wednesday morning. To RSVP, for more information or to submit questions for Ceniga, contact Marcia Stewart at rounduprepublicanwomen@hushmail.com or 541-276-1206.

Senior center to change meal venue

HERMISTON — The last day for meals in the current Hermiston Senior Center is Thursday, which features a special Mother's Day meal.

The menu for Thursday includes ham, yams, baked potato, vegetable and a special cake provided by Sun Terrace Hermiston. A special invitation is extended to residents in local assisted living facilities. Thursday's meal is at the current Hermiston Senior Center, 435 W. Orchard Ave., located at the old Umatilla County Fairgrounds.

Starting Tuesday, May 16, meals will be held at the Our Lady of Angels Catholic Church parish hall, 565 W. Hermiston Ave. The meals are served each Tuesday and Thursday at noon.

The cost is \$4 for adults and Meals on Wheels. It's free for kids 10 and under. There is a 50 cents fee for utensils and dishes. Transportation to the senior center can be arranged for a donation.

For more information or to schedule a ride, call 541-567-3582.

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