

Never thought we'd see the day ...



State Sen. Bill Hansell, wearing an Oregon State University cap provided by station director Phil Hamm, chats with Bryan Wolfe on Wednesday during a tour of the Hermiston Agricultural Research Extension Center. Hansell is an outspoken fan of the Oregon Ducks athletic programs.

Staff photo by E.J. Harris

STANFIELD

Motorcycle wreck victim remembered as coach

By JAYATI RAMAKRISHNAN
East Oregonian

Of the many ways Jason Blankenship was woven into the Stanfield community, perhaps the most significant was his love for his home team.

Blankenship, 40, died on Tuesday, March 20 when his motorcycle was rolled over by a semi truck on the Stanfield-Echo overpass. He was on his way to watch his daughter's softball game.

Blankenship's longtime boss at Noland Doors, Ron Noland, said the community is still trying to process the loss.

"Everybody leaned on Jason," Noland said on Wednesday. "He was Mr. Everything to everybody."

Noland recalled Blankenship's mechanical ability, and his willingness to help anyone in the community. He recalled his love of hunting and motorcycles, and memories of Blankenship from when he was a child.

"He started kindergarten with my oldest son," Noland said. "We have pictures of him and my son jumping motorcycles over ditches, stuff you shouldn't even try to do."

But Noland said Blankenship's greatest legacy would be his work with the young athletes of Stanfield.

"There wasn't any sport he wasn't right there in the middle of," he said.

Kent Barnes, a Hermiston teacher who taught and coached Blankenship when he was a student in Stanfield, recalled his dedication as a parent and coach.

"He coached junior baseball and Little League, he coached my daughter in softball," Barnes said. "A lot of people put time into his athletics, and he was willing to give it back."

He said while many



Blankenship

parents find it hard to make it to away games, Blankenship was rarely absent.

"We put a lot of miles on our Suburbans together," he said.

Curtis Blankenship recalled his brother's love for his children, and said he took a lot of pride in coaching and supporting them.

"He just gave them every opportunity, tried to give them the life any child should have," Curtis said.

Noland said his friend's life was not without challenges. When he hired him 15 years ago, he said Blankenship had recently gotten clean after some problems with drug use.

"He was a great kid growing up, and he made a couple of mistakes. When he came back, he just hit it out of the park," Noland said. "That was big to me. After he'd wrecked and gotten back on track, he was such a positive

influence to these kids."

Curtis said his brother found that opportunity as a coach, and always told the kids that if they were struggling in life, they could overcome their issues and be successful.

Curtis said his brother had a deep love of hunting and fishing, which he enjoyed sharing with his children. The two brothers, their father and a friend had also just started a company, Outback Customs, which builds custom motorcycles.

"We're absolutely going to keep it going," he said. "We're supposed to have a bike built by Pendleton Bike Week, and we're sure going to try."

There is a memorial for Blankenship on Saturday, March 31 at 1 p.m. at Stanfield Secondary School gymnasium.

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

UMATILLA

No leads on St. Patrick's Day shooting

By JAYATI RAMAKRISHNAN
East Oregonian

Umatilla Police continue to investigate the shooting of a man in the early hours of St. Patrick's Day.

On March 17, dispatch received a call at 3:24 a.m. of a shooting at Tri-Harbor Apartments, 210 Klickitat St., in Umatilla. Police Chief Darla Huxel said the Umatilla officer on duty was tied up with a DUI call when the report came in, but Umatilla County sheriff's officers were in the area and responded at 3:26 a.m. to the call.

Huxel said Umatilla Police was on the scene around 3:45 a.m.

The victim, who Huxel declined to identify, was transported to Good Shepherd Medical Center, Hermiston. Huxel said the victim has since been transferred to another medical facility, but she did not know where.

Huxel said the investi-

gation had been slowed by the victim's unwillingness to cooperate, and police have yet to identify the shooter. She said law enforcement has been reviewing video footage and trying to talk with anyone who might have been nearby during the shooting.

Huxel said that the city of Umatilla typically has one police officer on patrol duty, but during peak hours they try to have two, one of which may be a supervising officer. She said the department has seven patrol officers, and is trying to fill an eighth position.

"It's not a funding issue, but the application pool is pretty limited," she said.

Huxel said during low-staffing hours, such as the time when the shooting took place, UPD relies on working relationships with other law enforcement agencies like Umatilla and Morrow county sheriff's offices, and Hermiston police.

HERMISTON

Officers looking into shooting near Newport Park

East Oregonian

Hermiston police are investigating a shooting that took place near Newport Park on Tuesday evening.

According to Police Chief Jason Edmiston, officers responded at 8:27 p.m. to reports of gunshots near Newport Park. Once they arrived at Northeast Sixth Street and East Hurlburt Avenue, they found a dark-colored Honda sedan with several bullet holes in it.

"Preliminary investigation found that three occupants were in an argument with a male in a light-colored SUV," Edmiston said. "The argument continued with one of the three males

breaking out the back window of the SUV with a bat. The male in the SUV pulled a firearm and the three males fled the scene."

Edmiston said officers believe the male in the SUV pulled up to the unoccupied Honda and shot at it numerous times. They found shell casings near the Honda, and the SUV fled the area.

Edmiston said they have made contact with people involved in the incident, but did not say how many. He would not disclose whether officers knew the relationship between the two parties.

The EO will post more information as it becomes available.

HERMISTON

Defendant's fate rests on judge's ruling

By PHIL WRIGHT
East Oregonian

The court fight over the constitutionality of state sentencing reforms will land Friday in Umatilla County.

Cesar Macias Delatorre, 21, of Hermiston, could serve four years for theft and gun crimes — or he could serve 13 months. The difference hinges on the whether Umatilla County Circuit Judge Daniel Hill decides if House Bill 3078 is unconstitutional.

The law went into effect last year to reduce sentences for identity theft and first-degree theft.

Delatorre went to trial in January for first-degree trespass and third-degree theft. The jury found him guilty of both misdemeanors. A different jury in March found him guilty 11-1 on four felonies: possession of a firearm, felon in possession of a firearm and two counts of first-degree theft.

Umatilla County prosecutor Matthew Dyal in court filings

recommended sentencing Delatorre to four years in custody per Ballot Measure 57, the law Oregon voters passed in 2008 that set mandatory minimum sentences for certain property and drug crimes. Defense attorney Travis O'Neal recommended Delatorre should get no more than 13 months under HB 3078.

The district attorney's office in court filings contends the new law is unconstitutional because state legislators passed it with a simple majority vote, whereas the Oregon Constitution requires at least a two-thirds vote from

the House and Senate to lower the voter-approved sentences.

O'Neal in his filings argued HB 3078 reduced sentences the Legislature adopted in 2009 rather than sentences the voting public approved, and thus the law is constitutional. O'Neal also stated the Oregon Attorney General's Office takes the same position.

Circuit court judges in Washington County, Lincoln County and Clackamas County, however, have ruled otherwise and found the new law unconstitutional. Dyal asked the local court to follow in those steps.

Delatorre's sentencing — and the arguments for and against HB 3078 — begin Friday at 2 p.m. in Hill's Hermiston courtroom.

eOMEDIA group
The most valuable and respected source of local news, advertising and information for our communities.
www.eomediagroup.com

MCKAY CREEK ESTATES

Heart Happy
Celebrations™
KINDNESS • JOY • HEALTH • LAUGHTER • MUSIC

A program promoting healthy fulfilled lifestyles

Paint & Sip
Friday, March 30
at 5:30 p.m.

Come join us at McKay Creek Estates for our monthly Paint & Sip activity. We provide all the materials you need to paint a fun painting. There will light refreshments, including wine and beer, as well as a variety of sodas and bottled water.

Cost: \$20 for non-residents. FREE for residents.

Please call (541) 276-1987 for more information or to RSVP. Spots are limited.

McKay Creek Estates
1601 Southgate Place
Pendleton, OR 97801

JENYS HEART ART
Prestige Senior Living, L.L.C.

WILDHORSE RESORT & CASINO
3/29
Cineplex Show Times
\$5 Classic Movie • 4/4 • 12:00 PM
Double Indemnity
Ready Player One (PG13)
1:00* 7:00 • 4:00 10:00
Pacific Rim: Uprising (PG13)
11:50* 2:20* 4:50 7:20 9:50
Sherlock Gnomes (PG)
12:00* 4:30 6:40 • 4:00 9:20
Tomb Raider (PG13)
1:30* 4:10 6:50 9:30
A Wrinkle In Time (PG)
11:40* 2:10* 4:40 7:10 9:40
* Matinee Pricing
wildhorseresort.com • 541-966-1850
Pendleton, OR I-84 • Exit 216

Real Estate Auction
Sunday April 8, 2:00 PM
64273 E. Birch Creek Rd., Pilot Rock, OR
728 Acres in Two Parcels
Selling to the Highest Bidder(s) Regardless of Price
Preview: 1 PM - 3 PM
Saturday, March 31st
Live Internet Bidding Available
28 Acres with 2,712+ Sq. Ft. Spacious Home,
700 Acres with 600 Sq. Ft. Rustic Cabin, Abundant Wildlife
STUART REALTY GROUP, INC. **Macon Brothers Auctioneers**
StuartRealtyGroup.com 503-263-7253
MaconBrosAuction.com 509-529-7770
534-12-2-3/101