

TARIFF: There is fear tariffs will set off trade war

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caused delays in the metal arriving from the supplier.

If those delays get worse, Karlson said, a manufacturing or food processing plant in the area that went down due to a broken machine could take longer to get up and running again. However, as more and more exemptions have been granted, there is some sense that things could settle down.

“It seemed like a huge deal at first, but now the stuff I’m seeing seems like there’s hope it might work itself out,” Karlson said.

The construction industry is also waiting to see if things work themselves out. John Eckhardt from Knerr Construction in Hermiston said the past few weeks the company has been working on wood-framing projects, so they haven’t seen much of an effect.

“I haven’t seen it hit yet but I’m sure it’s coming,” he said.

Eckhardt said rapidly fluctuating markets would make it harder for construction companies to accurately bid on projects that involve a lot of steel, and increases in raw material costs drive up construction costs, but at the moment it’s hard to tell what the final effects of the



James Yates of Hermiston power coats a steel fuel tank while working at N.W. Metal Fabricators on Thursday in Hermiston.

Staff photo by E.J. Harris

tariffs will be.

“Now it’s speculative,” he said.

According to a recent report by the U.S. Department of Commerce, the U.S. is the world’s largest importer of steel, importing 34.6 million metric tons of

it in 2017. Canada was the top exporter, at 17 percent, with Brazil and South Korea following. About half the steel imported to the United States is used for construction of buildings and infrastructure.

In looking at how the

labor market in the region might be affected by the tariffs, Fridley said one of the biggest industries he could think of in Umatilla County that would likely be affected if the tariffs raise steel and aluminum prices is the travel trailer industry,

which uses metal in its construction of trailers.

Keystone RV’s manufacturing plant is one of the largest employers in Pendleton. The Pendleton plant referred questions to the corporate office in Indiana, which did not return

requests for comment.

According to data provided by Fridley showing the number of people employed in Umatilla County in 2016, there were 3,478 jobs in the manufacturing industry and 986 jobs in the construction industry.

While some industries are bracing for a negative impact due to price increases, the tariffs are expected to be beneficial for the U.S. steel and aluminum industries. The Associated Press reported that the U.S. steel industry employs 143,000 people nationwide and earned more than \$2.8 billion last year. Giving those industries some breathing room from competition from foreign suppliers is expected to lead to the creation of new jobs in the industry.

On the other hand, there is fear the tariffs will set off a trade war that will end up negatively affecting many industries, including agriculture.

Oregon exported \$21.9 billion in products to other countries in 2017, according to the International Trade Administration.

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Staff photo by E.J. Harris

Dr. Joseph Gifford will retire this month after 44 years practicing medicine in Eastern Oregon as a family practitioner.

DOCTOR: Gifford ‘has a big heart’

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now 70, recalled a huge rush of realization.

“I felt about six inches off the ground,” he said. “I thought, ‘This is what I must do.’ I was hooked.”

Fast forward more than 50 years and Gifford will retire this month after 44 years of medicine in Eastern Oregon as a family practitioner. Across the street from Good Shepherd Medical Center in Hermiston, an urgent care clinic bears his name.

To be accepted into medical school, Gifford said he transformed from a mediocre student to an excellent one. He graduated from Walla Walla University with a degree in chemistry and entered Loma Linda Medical School.

After completing their internships, Gifford and his medical school buddy, Dr. Richard A. Carpenter, started practicing in Pendleton. The two hospitals in town at the time didn’t have any emergency room doctors so town physicians covered. Gifford and Carpenter did more than their share.

“We were two young bucks covering most of it,” Gifford said with a grin.

After nine months, the pair of doctors started a practice in Heppner. The young physicians had their hands full.

“In Heppner, there were no specialists. It was good to have nine months in

‘I’m a people person with a type A personality, but I’m not the smartest physician on the block. I feel I have savvy, though. Savvy has gotten me through.’

Dr. Joseph Gifford

The doctor will retire this month after 44 years practicing medicine in Eastern Oregon

Pendleton, before we dived into the abyss,” Gifford said. “Our saving grace was the experience of the nurses there. We just acted like we knew what we were doing to hide our intimidation and insecurities.”

Such humility is pure Gifford.

“I’m a people person with a type A personality, but I’m not the smartest physician on the block,” he said. “I feel I have savvy, though. Savvy has gotten me through.”

The physician, generally upbeat and ebullient, doesn’t gloss over hard subjects during appointments.

“He’s not afraid to be real with his patients,” said nurse Nikkie Griffin. “He’s honest with them. He doesn’t sugarcoat.”

Gifford has noticed plenty of changes during his career, both positive and negative. Doctors specialize more and insurance companies play a larger role in determining care. It’s more difficult and expensive to have an independent practice.

“The independence of physicians is gone to a great extent,” he said.

On the other hand are “fantastic strides in medicine” such as pharmaceuticals, enhanced surgical procedures and increased human longevity.

“A lot of progress in medicine has happened in 44 years,” he said.

Gifford moved to Hermiston 27 years ago as a family physician and obstetrician. Sixteen years ago, he added the urgent care clinic. The hospital bought and assumed ownership of Gifford Medical last July. Gifford, who continued working there part-time, is easing himself toward the door. Patients and colleagues are dreading the 19th when he officially retires.

“He is one of those people who truly cares about his patients,” said Natasha Ellwanger, the practice manager. “He’s gone to nursing homes. He’s gone to people’s houses. You just don’t find that any more in a physician.”

“He has a big heart,” Griffin said. “Really huge.”

Ellwanger, who started in 2002 doing filing, said patients are sad at the thought of Gifford’s depart-

ture. Many have called the office just to say good-bye. She said Gifford saw 1,200 patients in his practice last year and that doesn’t count people he treated in urgent care. People often stop Gifford in town just to say hello.

In retirement, Gifford looks forward to traveling more with his wife, Lisa. The boat he keeps moored in the San Juan Islands will get more use. His three children and four grandsons will see him more often. He is a pilot, so he’ll spend extra time in the air, too.

Good Shepherd is recruiting a doctor to take Gifford’s place.

As Gifford looked back over the years, he said he is blessed to have found a profession that he loved so much. He recalled his father, a musician, telling him to look for a job that he looked forward to every day.

“You’ll never *have* to work a day in your life,” said Gifford, reciting his father’s words. “You’ll *get* to work.”

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COURT: ‘What’s important to me is it helps people’

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pre-sentencing model, so offenders can work through treatment to receive less severe sentences or even have the court dismiss charges. The state courts and the local public safety coordinating council will oversee the drug court.

Roy Blaine, trial court coordinator for the 6th Judicial District, said the new “treatment court” has several differences from the old drug court.

“We’re trying to keep it relatively small,” he said, somewhere in the area of 35 participants, and “looking for this to be a voluntary program.”

Toward the end of the old drug court, he said, almost every participant was on probation. The new plan is to provide treatment to people who want to find ways to improve their lives.

He and Jillian Viles, the new treatment court coordinator, continue to draft policies for the program, which this time would allow for Morrow County participants. That requires the approval of the Morrow County District Attorney’s Office, he said, plus plenty of coordination, such as for transportation to and from court sessions.

Primmer said Community Justice sought bids for a treatment provider, and Community Counseling Solutions, which offers behavioral health services in Morrow, Wheeler, Gilliam, and Grant counties, came up with a proposal to take on the job.

Under the plan, Community Counseling Solutions will hire two full-time certified alcohol and drug counselors and a clinician/program manger to provide drug court treatment in the 6th Judicial District, which encompasses Umatilla and Morrow counties. The clinician will work in Boardman, where the company has an office, and the counselors in Pendleton and Hermiston.

Community Counseling estimated a drug court services budget of \$596,000 from April 1, 2018 through



Primmer

June 30, 2019, including for travel and offices. That drops to about \$536,000 if the county provides work space.

Insurance will cover some of the costs, but Primmer said that leaves a gap of about \$250,000, and the funds from the 2017-19 Oregon Justice Reinvestment Grant would fill that hole. The state provides those funds to programs that keep offenders out of prison.

The size of the gap depends on several factors, Primmer said, including the number of participants and insurance coverage.

The Oregon Health Plan, for example, covers addiction treatment.

“So that amount won’t be static,” he said.

The aim is to start the court session in July and only in Hermiston at first. Blaine said he is recruiting an attorney to serve as the court’s pro-tem judge. That person needs to be able to commit to working at the court one day a week as well as learning about treatment court. That judge would answer to Circuit Judge Dan Hill for direction and guidance, Blaine said. Community Counseling Solutions would have to hire the staff and get them up to speed on the program.

Blaine also said there is evidence to show drug courts save communities money, and the first year would be enough time to see who well the program works and find funding sources. But the court, he said, is about much more than a financial line.

“What’s important to me is it helps people,” Blaine said. “It helps families, it keeps parents together with their kids and contributing to the community.”

The Umatilla County Board of Commissioners considers the treatment provider proposal during its public meeting starting at 9 a.m. Wednesday at the county courthouse, 216 S.E. Fourth St., Pendleton.

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