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UMATILLA



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

Umatilla City Councilor Selene Torres-Medrano is spearheading the first Mental Health Awareness Month for the city of Umatilla and the Umatilla School District. Torres-Medrano, who also works for the Umatilla School District, has devised a multi-pronged, month-long program that aims to improve mental health through physical wellness.

Mind your mental health

Umatilla schools are teaching ways physical, mental health intertwine

By JAYATI RAMAKRISHNAN
East Oregonian

Jumping rope or eating an apple is good for more than just your physical wellness — it can help keep your mind healthy, too.

Throughout the month of May, the city of Umatilla and the Umatilla School District will focus on mental health, and the many parts of life that contribute to it.

The events will parallel the national Mental Health Awareness Month theme, “whole body,” and will help residents understand the connections between physical activity, nutrition and mental well-being.

Breaking down the month into weekly themes, the district has released a calendar, and each day teachers and families are encouraged to do a different exercise or activity that focuses on mental health. There will also be free events throughout the month, including parent classes and a 5K run/walk.

Week 1 is called “let’s talk about it,” simply discussing with students and families what it means to be aware of mental health. Week 2, “mind and soul,” teaches students how to be aware of their thoughts and feelings. Week



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

Students in the leadership class at Clara Brownell Middle School made posters for Mental Health Awareness Month that now adorn the halls of the school in Umatilla.

3 focuses on the connection between physical and mental health, and Week 4 highlights the importance of nutrition.

The daily activities and tips include thought exercises — “tell someone two positive traits about yourself” or “ask an adult one thing they do to help themselves feel better” — physical activities, like doing 10 jumping jacks or going for a 10-minute walk, and healthy

See MIND/8A

Events for Umatilla Mental Health Awareness Month

Tuesday, May 16: Parent Zumba class, 6-8 p.m.

Saturday, May 19: 5K Race/Walk and mental health fair, 10 a.m., Village Square Park

Thursday, May 24: Parent cooking class, 6-8 p.m., McNary Heights Elementary School.

HERMISTON

Videos shed new light on murder case

Judge not convinced of self-defense or presumption of guilt

By JAYATI RAMAKRISHNAN
East Oregonian

The case of a Hermiston man charged with murder will go to trial in October after hearings this week revealed new information in the case — but not enough for the judge to agree to his release.

Tyree Houfmuse, 35, will remain in the Umatilla County Jail on charges of murder, manslaughter and felon in possession of a firearm. He has been in jail since June 2017 for the murder of James Cragun last Memorial Day weekend. Houfmuse’s trial is set to begin October 29.

The past two Tuesdays, Judge Eva Temple heard arguments for Houfmuse’s release after his attorney, Kara Davis, argued he had acted in self-defense.

District Attorney Dan Primus tried to convince the judge that there is enough presumption that Houfmuse is guilty of murder that Temple should order him to stay in jail with no bail.

Temple did not grant either side’s request, and reduced Houfmuse’s bail from \$1 million to \$250,000. She stated that there was not enough evidence to rule out self-defense, and that she did not see a strong presumption of guilt, either.

“There is a lot of contradictory evidence in this case,” Temple said after hearing both arguments. She said that according to Cragun’s autopsy, he had several injuries that have not been discussed elsewhere in the case, such as lacerations above his eye and bruised knees.

She also noted that the primary contributor of DNA on the gun was Cragun. Houfmuse’s DNA has not been found on the weapon. Primus said the state cannot explain the lack of Houfmuse’s DNA on the gun.

Over the two days of hearings, Temple heard more than eight hours of video interviews with Houfmuse and several witnesses, including a woman both Houfmuse and Cragun had dated, and two women who were present when Cragun was shot.

Houfmuse and the witnesses described the night Cragun died. They said Cragun drove up to the apartment Houfmuse and the woman were going into. Cragun got out of the car, jumped over a hedge and started moving toward Houfmuse.

Cragun had been convicted of assaulting



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

Tyree Houfmuse during a pre-trial hearing on March 27, 2018, at the Stafford Hansell Government Center in Hermiston.

See MURDER/8A

PENDLETON

Wildfire scenarios build local agencies’ ‘muscle memory’

U.S. Forest Service trains for how best to respond to area’s next big blaze

By ANTONIO SIERRA
East Oregonian

From the safety of the Pendleton Convention Center, some of the region’s top emergency officials analyzed a fire raging in eastern Umatilla County.

The fire started around 10 a.m. in a narrow, scraggly canyon near Gibbon, an unincorporated community east of Pendleton, where Meacham Creek

feeds into the Umatilla River. The fire quickly grew to envelop hundreds of acres and more than 100 structures.

If no one sprang out of their seat during the briefing, it was because the fire was a hypothetical scenario rather than a disaster-in-progress.

Dozens of officials from local governments and the region’s emergency response apparatus convened at the convention center to receive a training on National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy, a U.S. Forest Service program that aims to protect landscapes and communities from

See WILDFIRE/8A



Photo by Antonio Sierra

Joe Hessel, district forester for the Oregon Department of Forestry, talks about wildfire response at the Pendleton Convention Center.

