

SCHOOL: 'The school culture and atmosphere are awesome'

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ing from Oregon State University with a degree in animal science, Parks has had about two years of experience as a substitute teacher.

But teaching this subject will be fairly new for him.

"I've done different construction jobs, but as far as teaching (construction), absolutely not," he said.

The program, which this year had 220 students vying for 150 spots, will allow students to learn about 20 different trade skills before honing in on the ones that interest them.

"It's not your typical class, sitting and reading a book the whole time," he said. "We're getting to put our hands on it, figuring out where kids' interest really lies."

Parks will teach an "intro to woods and construction" course, which will cover subjects including framing, roofing, green energy, electrical work, plumbing and sheet rock, before students move on to other programs — such as the Columbia Basin Student-Built Homes program.

Parks said the course will teach students skills that will help them land jobs post-high school.

"There's a huge labor shortage in the United States," he said. "The class will teach skills every

students should have, but it'll absolutely get you a job."

Janci Spoo, another Hermiston High School alumna, will start teaching Health Services this year. The course will allow students to explore different careers in the health field, touching on laws and ethics, and specific areas of study like sports medicine. In addition to some anatomy and physiology concepts like blood pressure and heart rate, students will have the chance to get certified in CPR (cardiopulmonary resuscitation).

For Spoo, the job at Hermiston High School feels like home. The daughter of HHS principal Tom Spoo and a 2012 graduate of the school, she has been a long-term substitute in the Hermiston and Umatilla school districts, and has been the assistant coach of Hermiston's girls golf team for two years.

"The school culture and atmosphere are awesome," she said.

Spoo said she plans to give an understanding of lifelong fitness — activities and skills to stay healthy in their own lives — as well as careers helping others.

The students will log volunteer and internship hours throughout the term, and tour different local medical facilities.

Spoo said in the future she



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

Teacher Theresa Stangel reads instructions for students to write a short biography about themselves in a Bulldog catering class Monday at Hermiston High School.

hopes to take the students on trips to bigger facilities, such as Oregon Health and Science University in Portland.

Theresa Stangel will help equip students with another type of skill. The new family and consumer sciences teacher will teach several courses — hospitality and tourism, Bulldog catering, and principles of food and nutrition.

Originally from Enterprise,

Stangel studied at Oregon State University, and then taught for three years at small schools in Texas. She taught basic sewing, cooking, food science and child development, but had more ground to cover at those schools.

"It wasn't quite as specific as here," she said.

She said she's happy to be back at a bigger school, especially one that's supportive of career and technical education.

"It helps them get experiences in the industry prior to being in the real world," she said of the catering program. "It's an actual situation where they show up, and make a product they get paid for or not based on the outcome."

Stangel said she feels fortunate to come into a program that's already established, but she hopes to impart a few new concepts upon her students.

"I have some experience with game meats — my family has a bison ranch," she said. "I'm hopefully going to use that to let the kids experience some different foods."

The teachers said they're pleased with the community and district's support for career technical education programs.

"It allows kids to already have that on their resume, if they're going to enter the industry right out of high school," Stangel said.

She said people seem to be recognizing the importance of these types of programs, and giving students a path to something other than a four-year university.

"It's kind of the golden age of CTE — it's a good time to be coming in," Parks said.

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HOUFMUSE: Said Cragun came running toward him and took a gun out of a bag

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one of Cragun's children.

In court proceedings that have spanned more than a year, Houfmuse has repeatedly claimed self-defense, stating that Cragun charged at him, and had been making statements in the days leading up to his death threatening Houfmuse's life.

Judge Eva Temple, who had presided over the case from the beginning, was recently disqualified from presiding over criminal cases by District Attorney Dan Primus, and the case had been turned over to Sullivan in the last week.

Primus released a brief statement about the settlement Monday afternoon. He said Houfmuse pleaded guilty on a new case, following a court decision made last week requiring the state to try the murder and felon in possession charges separately. The release said the court was concerned that trying the two together would be too prejudicial to the defendant.

"At the same time this ruling to sever was made, the court also ruled that defendant's statements would be inadmissible, leaving insufficient evidence for the state to continue to proceed to trial on the murder,"

the statement said.

Primus could not be reached for further comment.

Houfmuse's attorney, Kara Davis, said her client always had a strong self-defense case.

"Oregon is a stand-your-ground state," she said. "If someone charges you, you have the right to defend yourself."

She said the lack of conclusive forensic evidence also played a part. The state crime lab found that Cragun was the primary contributor of DNA on the gun, and Houfmuse's DNA was not found on the gun — a fact the state could not explain.

But Davis said one of the biggest factors in the final outcome was the judge's decision to suppress Houfmuse's statements.

"I think that was the final nail in the coffin for the state's case," she said.

Davis said had the case gone to trial, the only charge on which she would have been concerned about a conviction was felon in possession of a firearm.

She said Houfmuse agreed to plead guilty to possessing the firearm after it went off. The gun was found in a field a few hundred yards away from the apartment complex where Cragun died.

"It was tragic, but just because it's tragic doesn't make it criminal," Davis said. "It was never a good case for murder."

During a hearing in May, Temple heard more than eight hours of video and audio interviews with Houfmuse and several witnesses, including a woman both Houfmuse and Cragun had dated, and two other women, all of whom were present the night Cragun died.

According to descriptions from witnesses and Houfmuse, that night Cragun drove up to the apartment that Houfmuse and Cragun's ex-girlfriend were about to enter, got out of the car, jumped over a hedge and started coming toward Houfmuse.

Houfmuse said Cragun came running toward him and took a gun out of a bag. Houfmuse said he grabbed Cragun's hands and twisted the gun, and the gun went off.

Autopsy reports showed the entry point of the bullet on Cragun's upper left back area. Primus said during a May hearing that the angle made it impossible for the gun to have been twisted as Houfmuse claimed.

Cragun had been convicted of assaulting the woman two years before his

death, and she had a restraining order against him. The video interviews and court documents revealed that Cragun had been calling her and sending her threatening text messages, threatening Houfmuse's life and hers.

This is the fourth time Houfmuse has faced charges for a shooting. In both 2000 and 2005 he was charged with attempt to commit murder, and both charges were dismissed. He was also charged in 2014 with a shooting outside a bar in Kennewick that left a man paralyzed, but a jury decided that he acted in self-defense.

Davis said she is not concerned about Houfmuse committing other crimes once he is released.

"He's not a scary person to me at all," she said. "I think he's had some really unfortunate incidents. I think if he can start again in a new place, he won't have to worry about a reputation."

Hermiston Police Chief Jason Edmiston said he was confident the department had identified all the people involved in Cragun's death.

"There's not a shooter floating around," he said.

He said he had been in contact with Primus throughout the case.

"I can say that this has

really worn on him and his office," he said.

Edmiston said based on the evidence, this outcome was the most they could hope for.

"Unfortunately this was all that could be proven beyond a reasonable doubt," he said.

Cragun's mother, Beverly, was in the courtroom Monday. Cragun's entire immediate family has been present throughout the hearings.

"He didn't get what he deserved," she said. "He's going to kill again. I feel sorry for the family who's going to have to go through what my family has been going through."

She said the family is going to try to pick up the pieces and go on with their

lives without their son.

Davis said with Houfmuse's credit for the time he's already spent in jail, plus five months that will be taken off his sentence for "good time," or time off for good behavior, he will likely spend between two and five more months in jail.

She said Houfmuse did not say anything during the settlement.

"This is a tragic situation no matter how you look at it," she said. "There was no way he wanted to say anything to make Mr. Cragun's family feel like he was gloating. There's no right thing to say."

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REUNION: Experience of the class shaped by WWII

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phones and social media, teachers stood in front of a blackboard with a piece of chalk.

For Esther Richards, Pendleton as she remembers it is a recollection from years passed. She moved to Portland 50 years ago with her husband and thought she would always come back home, but by the time she retired her husband had passed away and she had the comfort of family on the west side of the state.

Richards' Pendleton was "very small, with no traffic lights and fewer cars." Yet similar to the town today, Main Street was a popular locale, and had stores with soda fountains where she could buy a Coke for a nickel, she said.

On weekends, the teens attended movies at three movie theaters or attended dances at grange halls. Most worked part-time jobs. Kelley played trumpet at dances. Tomlinson worked as a soda jerk at the drug store and on the line at the pea factory. Classmates drove trucks during wheat harvest. After school, Kelley played football, ran track and played in the high school band. Tomlinson played volleyball and tennis and acted in school plays.

Though the class was the last class of the World War II



Staff photo by Kathy Aney

Esther Richards, of the PHS class of 1945, chats with fellow graduates at Saturday's reunion at the Eagles Lodge.

era, the first member to die wasn't a soldier, Kelley said. Classmate Jake Gorfickle (and his wife) died at age 19 or 20 in a car accident. Kelley dubbed his class "The Survivors."

"We survived the Depression of the '30s, the Second World War and all the subsequent wars," he said.

The experience of the class was shaped by World War II. During the war, the American government implemented rations on various commodities, including gasoline. Richards remembers that the school didn't have out-of-town games because no one had gas. And she recalled metal and scrap paper drives with competitions between different grades.

Richards said she "dis-

tinctly remembers" the moment she heard about World War II breaking out in America. She had gone to see a movie at the Rivoli theatre and was walking out into the street.

"And there were paper boys in the street yelling, 'Extra, extra! Pearl Harbor bombed by the Japanese,' It was Dec. 7, 1941," she said.

Many people didn't get to formally graduate because they entered the service, she said.

Henry Downing was one of those people.

"My mother picked up my diploma," he said. Downing enlisted in the Navy and was later recruited to the Marine Corps. He got called for service in November of 1944 and spent about four of five months in Guam

and another nine months as a dental assistant in China. Because the war ended in 1945, there weren't many people in the class who served on the front lines.

Tomlinson lost one of her brothers in the war. His remains, identified only recently, were buried in Pendleton's Olney Cemetery in 2013.

Kelley and Tomlinson never dated. Good friends, they lived a block apart and often sat on one or the other's front porch and talked about life. As an adult, Kelley owned a Pendleton music store and Tomlinson raised five children with her husband, Ray.

One renowned classmate was contemporary sculptor Kenneth Snelson, who used wires and tubes to create towers and arcs. He died in New York City in 2016. Rudy Enbysk became Pendleton's mayor. The longest-working member is Albert Thews, a California attorney who retired last year at the age of 90.

In 1990, some class members started meeting for lunch monthly in Pendleton. Tomlinson still drives from Spokane and Kelley from Walla Walla.

Next year's class reunion is already on the graduates' minds.

"We wouldn't miss it," Tomlinson said. "Our friendships have kept us young."

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