

EAST OREGONIAN

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WINNER OF THE 2018 ONPA GENERAL EXCELLENCE AWARD

One dollar



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

Umatilla County Circuit Court Judge Eva Temple signs a certificate of completion for a new CASA volunteer after a swearing-in ceremony on Monday in Hermiston.

Police catch suspect in Umapine homicide

Question remains as to suspect's true name, but local murder charge awaits

By PHIL WRIGHT
East Oregonian

The man police suspect of murdering his co-worker at the Umapine Creamery is in custody.

Umatilla County Sheriff Terry Rowan said police found Decidero Vargas-Ortiz staying at the Clover Island Inn, Kennewick, and arrested him Tuesday at about 1:30 a.m.

Early reports identified the suspect as Decidero Cruz Vargas. Rowan said Decidero Vargas-Ortiz is the name the sheriff's office is using in this case. He explained that stemmed from fingerprinting, which generates state and FBI identification numbers.

"We were able to connect the dots between that name and a legitimate FBI number," he said.

Umatilla County District Attorney Dan Primus said his office issued a warrant for the arrest of the suspect on the lone charge of murder and filed that count

See SUSPECT/8A

Reinforcements swear in

More than half of county's foster children didn't have an advocate in October

By JADE MCDOWELL
East Oregonian

At age 23, Meagan Duncan-Osborn is younger than most court-appointed special advocates.

Because of her own history as a foster care adoptee, she said she wants to be an example and a source of hope for future generations of foster children.

Duncan-Osborn was removed from her mother's care when she was "very young" and placed with strangers for a while before her father's parents were cleared to become her foster parents. They eventually adopted her around age 7, and continued to provide a home for other foster children. But both died within a year of each other before Duncan-Osborn was 17, leaving her to "figure out life" on her own after that.

She doesn't remember having an assigned advocate, but she considers herself extremely lucky to have had loving grandparents advocating for her when she was in the system.

"These kids need support, someone to stick with them," she said. "They might go from foster home to foster home, from caseworker to caseworker, and you want someone to stick with them from start to finish and know what their story is."



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

A new class of CASA volunteers pose for a photo with Umatilla County Circuit Court Judge Eva Temple after a swearing-in ceremony for the new volunteers on Monday in Hermiston.

More Umatilla County children will have that opportunity after 10 new court-appointed special advocates were sworn in Monday in a courtroom at Stafford Hansell Government Center in Hermiston.

Known as CASAs, the specially trained volunteers are assigned to be a child's advocate as they move through the court system. They visit with the child at least once a month, attend supervised visits and court hearings, meet the foster parents and biological

parents, study the details of the case and submit reports to the judge about what they believe is in the child's best interest. In October, 73 foster children in Umatilla and Morrow counties had a court-appointed special advocate, but 106 did not.

"Since we got these ones sworn in, we can probably get another 15 to 20 kids CASAs," said Jesus Rome, the CASA manager.

See CASA/8A

PENDLETON Chamber teams with downtown association

Will join under one roof at Main Street center

By ANTONIO SIERRA
East Oregonian

The Pendleton Downtown Association and Pendleton Chamber of Commerce are moving in together, but they're going to keep some of their assets separate.

The two nonprofits announced Tuesday that they signed a memorandum of alliance that establishes a formal agreement between the two entities, including co-locating the association's office at the chamber's 501 S. Main St. visitor information center.

"We're juggling a lot of balls, but it will be fun," association president Fred Bradbury said.

Chamber Executive Director Janet Duffy, who was hired in July, said she was surprised that the two parties already didn't have a working coalition when she arrived in town.

Bradbury said both sides have been in discussions about the arrangement for the past few months and the move has the endorsement of both Oregon Main Street and the city of Pendleton.

See PDA/8A

"Maybe these kids are thinking about **running away**, maybe they're **contemplating suicide**. I want to tell them 'I was there and look at me now.'"

Meagan Duncan-Osborn

Money for Columbia River tribal fishing village restored

Ancestors have fished on Columbia River for thousands of years

By MOLLY HARBARGER
The Oregonian/OregonLive

THE DALLES — After more than a year of obstacles, the federal government will resume a project to fulfill an 80-year-old promise. The Trump administration halted work in October 2017 on a plan to build a village for tribal members who fished the Columbia River for millennia, but last week, money reappeared in the budget.

"We're so delighted by the White House's decision to

restore and direct funds to the Columbia River tribal housing initiative," said Charles Hudson, intergovernmental affairs director for the Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission. "We did a lot of scratching and clawing to keep this project active after a year of lapsed funding."

Leaders from the Warm Springs, Yakama, Umatilla and Nez Perce tribes have lobbied along with congressional officials from Oregon and Washington to find a way to circumvent the barriers the Trump administration put in the way.

A year ago, tribal members who live along the Columbia

See TRIBAL/8A



AP Photo/Gosia Wozniacka, File

This Aug. 22, 2014, file photo, shows the home of Ranetta Spino and her family at the river's edge at Lone Pine, a Native American fishing site on the Columbia River near The Dalles.



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