

OWL: The owl initially seemed a candidate for euthanasia

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On Saturday, the good Samaritan returned to Pendleton to personally release the owl back into the wild. He and his 11-year-old daughter Arianna had given the bird the name “Faith.” Turns out the moniker was appropriate since the owl initially seemed a candidate for euthanasia. Lynn Tompkins, Blue Mountain Wildlife’s executive director, formed her words carefully when Infante called her to check on the bird. “I knew the prognosis was bad,” she said. “I told him, ‘We will try.’” The wing was indeed broken. The owl also had an ugly laceration on its back, a dislocated elbow, an abrasion on one of its eyelids, dehydration and bruising.

Tompkins put the broken bone back in place using traction and started the owl on antibiotics, but survival looked questionable. Infante called every week. At first, Tompkins gave guarded progress reports. Gradually, the updates improved. “She just got better and better and better,” Tompkins said. Sometimes, she said, there’s no accounting “for the tincture of time.” Gravely damaged birds sometimes pull through despite their dire circumstances. “You provide birds a safe place and they heal themselves,” she said. Nobody was more delighted with the owl’s improvement than Infante. Since the bird seemed destined to survive, he passed

on a request from his daughter Arianna that they be allowed to name the owl. Tompkins cheerfully agreed. The bird’s new name was Faith. “It fit perfectly,” Infante said. He said he realizes that many other truckers and other drivers passed by the owl that day in August. Why didn’t he keep on driving, too? “For me, it was a duty, an obligation. I grew up as a person who loved nature and always loved animals,” he said. “The owl is a majestic, awesome bird.” Infante drove back to Pendleton on his day off for the final act in Faith’s healing adventure. On Saturday morning, he and Tompkins took the bird to the McKay Creek National Wildlife Refuge, across Highway

395 from the rehabilitation facility. Infante crouched next to the carrier and looked to Tompkins for the final OK. She nodded. When the cage door opened, the owl took a couple of running steps and went airborne. “There she goes,” Infante said. He smiled a long smile as the bird landed in a far-away tree. This was closure. “I wanted to finish the connection, close the loop,” he said. “It made me feel good to see her leave and go back to the wild.”



Contributed photo
Nick Infante holds Faith the owl shortly before he released her at the McKay Creek National Wildlife Refuge.

EOTEC: Report suggests improvements to marketing and customer service

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but said they had been consulted, and he didn’t feel the city’s top priority should be the “two nights a year” when that parking was at capacity. “One of the reasons the RV park has been a priority is because of its potential to generate revenue,” he said. Councillor John Kirwan backed Smith up on that point, saying that with the proper amenities the city could get \$300 a month per space from the RV park to help keep EOTEC financially solvent. He said the city needed to look at EOTEC as more than “replacement fairgrounds.”

Moving the RV park made sense, he said, because if people were going to be living in the RV park long term, they needed access that didn’t require driving through the middle of EOTEC. Smith said the council would see a proposal during their next meeting, on Jan. 14, for a price and plan for the upgrades Knerr Construction has been hired to build. On Monday the council also discussed a draft of a strategic plan for EOTEC, put together by the city’s EOTEC advisory committee, city staff and SSW Consulting. Mayor David Drotzmann, who sits on the

committee, said the draft showed recommendations consolidated from a survey and focus groups, but the committee hoped the council would now help prioritize and put timelines to those recommendations. “This is a living document,” he said. The 32-page version presented Monday outlines 28 different broad recommendations for the city moving forward, broken down into smaller steps. Under “improve landscaping and overall beautification of the site,” for example, the report recommends developing a landscaping plan, working with Farm-City Pro Rodeo to

finalize arena landscaping, ensuring proper irrigation infrastructure is in place and budgeting for ongoing maintenance of landscaping. Other facility improvements recommended include improving access roads, improving parking, providing a space for nursing mothers, implementing noise mitigation measures, improving security and securing water rights to the site. The report recommends the addition of larger features to EOTEC as well. A multi-sports practice facility could provide additional athletic fields to the community, the report sug-

gests, and an indoor arena/pavilion could provide a home for more equestrian events. An amphitheater was also suggested, as well as expanding and improving current facilities, such as barns and restrooms. On the operations side, the report suggests improvements to marketing and customer service. Those suggestions include creation of a marketing plan, hiring a marketing and sales position, creating an “EOTEC brand,” developing partnerships in tourism and creating a strong social media presence. The report also has some practical advice about reviewing event policies,

establishing vendor contracts and clarifying leadership roles. Using feedback from an online survey and focus groups, the report suggests 24 different types of events that might be a good fit for EOTEC. Based on community interest, top events were concerts, food festivals, farmers markets, beer and wine festivals and athletic events. Some suggestions were for annual events, such as a festival of lights in the winter or high school graduation in June. There was also interest in trade shows for boats, RVs, airplanes, home and garden, outdoorsmen and other interests.

WILDHORSE: ‘We were a little hamstrung coming into the budget right off the bat’

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year in Boardman. Lydig also recently designed and built the new golf clubhouse for Wildhorse. George’s team obtained three bids for the expansion from reputable companies, Bennie said, and each came in about 25 percent over budget. But George had a directive for penciling out the costs — the second

hotel, new conference center and the bowling alley all must stay. “We were a little hamstrung coming into the budget right off the bat,” Bennie quipped. Lydig first trimmed about 15,000 square feet from the massive build, he said, then turned to finding ways to save on mechanical or electrical designs, such as using different technol-

ogy. After a month-and-half of collaboration, he said, Lydig produced a budget that works. George last week explained the project had to consider tariffs on steel from China and wood from Canada, but the labor force is a major factor. Contractors have work lined up, he said, and can name their price in this market. Bennie told the packed

meeting room at the Pendleton Red Lion the proposal contains contingencies for tariffs and worker shortages, but the expansion will need careful scheduling. The Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Res-

ervation own the resort near Pendleton. The Board of Trustees governs the tribes, while the General Council represents the tribal members. Both entities vote soon on the final approval of the project.

Bennie said Lydig’s contract ends this week, and the tribes can vote to keep Lydig on for the big job. He said Lydig tends to rely on local workers and subcontracts about 85 percent of all projects.

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