

Oregon's new crime lab ready for business

By PHIL WRIGHT
East Oregonian

PENDLETON — The new Oregon State Police crime lab in Pendleton is open and running.

Calvin Davis is the forensic scientist in charge of the lab at 612 Airport Road, practically next door to the local command for Oregon State Police and the headquarters of the Pendleton Police Department. He said the building is a significant upgrade from the old office space on the 700 block of Southwest Emigrant Avenue.

He stopped short of calling that place “makeshift,” but noted the old building was better suited for typical office work than it was the demands of a crime laboratory. Stepping into the new chemistry section, for example, he said, feels not only more comfortable but a good deal safer.

State police had options for converting other buildings and spaces into a crime lab, but each came with big downsides. Blue Mountain



The team at the new Oregon State Police crime lab in Pendleton have the place up and running since moving in May 15, 2019.

Staff photo by Benjamin Lonergan

Community College offered to provide space at its Pendleton campus. Making the lab secure, however, would have been a significant issue.

State police decided to pay about \$4.5 million to design and build a new lab.

The construction began last August and wrapped in the spring.

“We moved in on May 15,” Davis said, “but it took us awhile to get up and going and set everything up.”

Some of that was due to

the typical nature of moving across town. But Davis said a forensic laboratory takes more than plugging equipment into outlets. He said the scientific equipment the lab depends on had to go through calibrations

and verification to ensure it worked.

The lab staff also have found a few things that need a bit more work, such as a blemish here or a sticky drawer there. Contractors are making those fixes, but

Davis said there have been no major repairs.

Local law enforcement remain keen on having the lab nearby.

Hermiston police chief Jason Edmiston said it sure beats having to deliver evidence to the OSP lab in Bend or even to La Grande, where state police considered moving the local lab. Umatilla County's population also has the greatest demand for an evidence team, he said, and the staff in Pendleton are top notch.

Pendleton police chief Stuart Roberts said the investment should signal the end to regular talk of cutting funding for the lab or yanking it out of the county. He said he argued year in and out to keep the lab in town since donning chief bars 17 years ago.

Like Edmiston, he praised the lab staff for the work it does, from gathering evidence in the field to prescreening DNA. He also said the shiny jewel of a new lab could entice young forensic scientists to relocate and stick around Pendleton.

Friend remembers Trenton Williams as ‘positive about everything’

By PHIL WRIGHT
East Oregonian

HERMISTON — Jared Warren of Hermiston recalled his friend Trenton Williams as a life-loving buddy ready for just about any adventure.

“I tell you what,” Warren said, “that guy was never stuck at this house. He was always looking for something to do.”

Williams, 20, died last weekend while boating on the Columbia River, along with Janice Arsenault, 44, of Umatilla. The Umatilla County Sheriff's Office continues to investigate their deaths.

Warren said Williams hailed from Kuna, Idaho, and moved to Eastern Oregon

for work.

“He and I were hired out together at the railroad last March,” Warren said. “We were good friends since then.”

Williams lived in Pendleton but came to Warren's home to enjoy video games and barbecues. Williams recently got into rock climbing, and earlier this year bought a motorbike. Warren said Williams “absolutely loved” the machine and recounted the fun they had when he rode on the back with his friend.

“It was just so funny,” he said. “Two bigger-sized guys riding a motorbike. They had to videotape it, it was

so funny.”

The past few weekends, Williams took to spending time on the Columbia River and hanging out with Arsenault. Warren described Williams and Arsenault as friends. He said it was unfortunate his friend died so young.

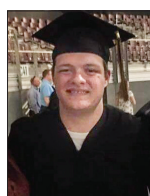
“Trent was a good kid,” Warren said. “He always had a smile on his face. He was just positive about everything. He might have been ornery about it, but he was always positive.”

An online donation account at gofundme.com is raising money to help with the cost of Williams' funeral.

Nearly 80 donors have contributed \$4,090.

And Laundry Smith of Athena started an online donation account at gofundme.com in memory of Michael Newbold of Weston. The 16-year-old student at Weston McEwen High School died June 11 in a car crash on a back road in Umatilla County. Nearly two dozen people as of Friday contributed \$1,180 toward the account's \$10,000 goal.

“Nothing can replace Michael,” according to the statement on the page, “but we hope this effort will relieve some of the family's stress and bring an element of comfort and support to them, during this heartbreaking time of deep loss.”



Williams

Hermiston council to consider local improvement district

By JADE MCDOWELL
East Oregonian

HERMISTON — The Hermiston city council will consider an option to form a local improvement district for its South Hermiston Industrial Park on Monday.

The council meeting will start with a work session at 6 p.m. to discuss options for an LID or urban renewal district, followed by a regular business meeting at 7 p.m.

Local improvement districts are used by cities to distribute the cost of improvements between neighboring land owners. In this case the improvements being considered would include new water and sewer mains between South Highway 395 and Penney Avenue along an unimproved right-of-way and into property owned by the Port of Umatilla. It

would also include paving the currently undeveloped Southeast 10th Street right-of-way, turning it into essentially a new road, and paving Campbell Drive.

A resolution up for vote Monday would launch a feasibility study for the proposed LID, which would be presented to the council on July 8.

On Monday the council will also hold a public hearing and vote to change the zoning of a half-acre piece of property at 1855 Northeast North St. behind Community Bank. The resolution would change the map designation from commercial to residential, allowing a proposed duplex development.

Monday's agenda also includes two facade grants for downtown businesses, a presentation on tribal cultural affairs and staff and committee reports.

Wyden will hold town hall in Pendleton

PENDLETON — U.S. Sen. Ron Wyden will hold town halls on June 30 in Umatilla County.

The town hall is scheduled for 4 p.m. in the Bob Clapp Theatre in Pioneer Hall at Blue Mountain Community College.

In fulfillment of his pledge to hold at least one town hall each year in each of the state's 36 counties, Wyden has held 942 town halls statewide — including 29 so far this year.

“Heading into the Fourth of July when America celebrates our independence, these upcoming open-to-all town halls in Baker, Umatilla and Sherman counties put democracy into action locally,” Wyden said. “I look forward very much to throwing open the doors of government and hearing from residents of Eastern Oregon. Listening to Oregonians in

every nook and cranny of our state is essential to finding solutions that work.”

Fatal stabbing under investigation by police

MILTON-FREEWATER — A 22-year-old man died after he was found with stab wounds in Milton-Freewater.

According to a city of Milton-Freewater press release, 911 callers Friday at 12:24 a.m. reported the stabbing victim was on the 600 block of Ward Street. Police and emergency crews responded.

Paramedics transported the man, who police did not identify, to Providence St. Mary Medical Center, Walla Walla. He later died en route to Kadlec Regional Medical Center, Richland, Washington.

The Milton-Freewater Police Department is investigating the death. Umatilla County District Attorney Dan

Primus said his office is working with the police, and this case does not involve the local major crimes team.

That team consists of detectives and officers from area agencies to help in big cases. The district attorney or a law enforcement agency head can call out the team. Milton-Freewater is an active member of the team.

Local entities face hefty fines for polluting

PENDLETON — Local companies and public bodies are on the hook for thousands of dollars for water and air pollution.

The Oregon Department of Environmental Quality

reported issuing 21 penalties statewide totaling \$292,752 in May for various environmental violations. The largest penalty was against an Eastern Oregon entity.

The DEQ issued a \$48,683 fine against Union County for violations at the La Grande/Union County Airport, La Grande. According to the agency, the county, which owns and operates the airport, had a permit requiring the control and monitoring of erosion. The county did not do that, and the construction starting in August 2018 of a rappel base for the National Forest Service resulted in significant amounts of sediment entering a drainage ditch that connects to a critical habitat for Snake River Basic steelhead trout.

BRIEFLY

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6/21 - 6/23
Cineplex Show Times
\$5 Classic Movie
Showing Wednesday 12PM
JULIUS CAESAR
Toy Story 4 (PG)
12:00p* 2:00p* 2:30p* 4:50p 7:10p
9:30p
Men in Black: International (PG13)
1:40p* 4:20p 7:00p 9:40p
The Secret Life of Pets 2 (PG)
12:00p* 2:20p* 4:30p 6:50p 9:10p
Aladdin (PG)
12:50p* 3:40p* 6:30p 9:20p
Shaft (R)
Friday 21st to Tuesday 25th
7:20p
Dark Phoenix (PG13)
Friday 21st to Tuesday 25th
4:40p 9:50p
Space Jam (PG)
Wednesday 26th • 10:00a*
* Matinee Pricing
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Affecting as many as 1 in 100 older adults, Parkinson's is the second most common neurological condition
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St. Anthony Hospital, 2801 St. Anthony Way, Pendleton
Conference Rooms 1 & 2
Presented by Dr. Delaram Safarpour & Central Oregon's Program Coordinator, Carol Pfeil
• Free event
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