

Sheriff’s office going to the dogs

Umatilla County announces return of K-9 program

By ALEX CASTLE
East Oregonian

PENDLETON — Perps beware, the Umatilla County Sheriff’s Office is bringing on an expert to sniff out crimes in 2020.

The UCSO announced last week it’s reviving its K-9 program thanks to a \$20,000 grant from the Wildhorse Foundation that will cover the purchase, training and equipment costs of the program.

“I just think that it’s a tremendous asset for the office,” Sheriff Terry Rowan said. “There’s so many different applications, from detection to apprehension of suspects.”

At the end of the week, Deputy Cody Marcum leaves to begin training at Shallow Creek Kennels in Sharpsville, Pennsylvania, with Skoty, the 18-month-old Belgian malinois who will be returning as his partner when the two complete training in March.

It was only appropriate for Marcum to be selected as the dog’s handler, Rowan said, since the deputy was the one who advocated to restart the program and undertook much of the grant application to Wildhorse.

The K-9 program’s return to Umatilla County has been a few years in the making for Marcum.

Three years ago while training at the police academy, Marcum said he “fell in love” with the idea of having a K-9 as a partner when one was brought out during a session. Helping convince him, he added, was a friend with a K-9 partner at the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife in Irrigon.

“A dog’s more faithful to you then you could ever ask for from anyone,” Marcum said. “Having that extra set



Photo courtesy of Umatilla County Sheriff’s Office
Deputy Cody Marcum, of the Umatilla County Sheriff’s Office, poses for a picture with Skoty, the office’s new K-9.

of eyes and ears can make a big difference when it comes to protecting yourself and others.”

On top of that, Marcum said the dog will be utilized for duties like tracking suspects or missing persons, detecting narcotics, apprehending suspects and acting as a public deterrent to crime.

The sheriff’s office previously operated a K-9 program from 2010 to July 2014 under then-Deputy Lindsey Evans, who has since retired. Evans spearheaded the program, Rowan said, and worked successfully with two different dogs over those years.

“First and foremost is all the drug cases,” Rowan said while reflecting on the program’s past impact. “And then of course, was the apprehension of Lukah Chang.”

Chang, who is now serving 35 years to life in the Oregon State Penitentiary for the murder of one woman in Pendleton and

the attempted murder of another, was apprehended at the Pendleton Convention Center in 2013 when police cornered him in an area above a stairwell. Yosh, the sheriff’s K-9 at the time, entered the scene and began barking, which quickly led to Chang surrendering himself to authorities.

Less than a year later, Rowan said Yosh died after ingesting what they believed to be poison. An investigation turned up no leads or suspects and the program went dark in the five years since.

But after Marcum spends the next six weeks training with Skoty in Pennsylvania, the program will finally make its return in March.

Marcum said he’ll spend most of the training learning how to properly handle Skoty and utilize him as a tool for the office. However, he highlighted that much of it will just be the two learning about each other and building a connection.

Rowan added that a

majority of a K-9’s success is derived from the relationship between it and its handler and how well the officer is able to understand the dog, which means the course in Pennsylvania is just the beginning.

“The training doesn’t stop when he comes home,” Rowan said. “It’s a daily process.”

Earlier this month, Marcum flew to Pennsylvania for five days to observe the dogs and their trainers at Shallow Creek Kennels, and ultimately select which one would become his partner. After watching Skoty over that time, it was a pretty easy choice for Marcum.

“During the training he was always eager to please,” he said. “He’s just a happy dog. He’s going to be great with kids.”

That’s especially important for Marcum, who has 4- and 6-year-old daughters at home.

“Once they’re paired with a dog, the dog is fully immersed in their family,” Rowan said. “It’s not a family pet, but it still becomes a part of their family.”

Marcum said his daughters are aware, and excited, for their family to grow in the spring.

“They’re obviously a tool,” he said of K-9s. “But they’re also more than that. He will be a member of my family.”

To account for the daily care of housing and feeding Skoty, Marcum will receive a 5% increase in pay to offset the costs.

While there’s other costs associated with running a K-9 program, Rowan said many of them will be taken care of thanks to the Wildhorse grant. One of the few things left unaccounted for was building a kennel that can safely hold Skoty at Marcum’s home, but Rowan said Home Depot has offered to donate all of the materials and labor to construct it for free.

Winter grazing



Photo courtesy of Mike Morehead
A deer grazes on bird seed in the yard of Pilot Rock residents Mike and Barbara Morehead. Barbara Morehead wrote that the many animals passing through their yard “are very appreciative of being able to share the bird seed.”

M-F police investigating reported shooting incident

By ALEX CASTLE
East Oregonian

MILTON-FREEWATER — The Milton-Freewater Police Department is investigating a report that a Walla Walla, Washington, woman was shot in the leg, according to an email from police chief Doug Boedigheimer.

The incident occurred in the area of Southwest Second Street and South Elizabeth Street around 12:30 a.m. on Christmas morning.

The case is “highly unusual,” Boedigheimer wrote, because the police department had no contact with the victim at all and didn’t know of the incident until 12 hours after it reportedly occurred.

According to the email, the Walla Walla Police Department was initially contacted by staff at St. Mary’s Hospital in Walla Walla because a woman had been dropped off with a gunshot wound to her leg Wednesday morning.

Walla Walla police said the woman was uncooperative and would only say

the shooting didn’t occur in Washington.

It’s unclear whether the victim was discharged or “simply left the hospital with a bullet still in her leg” later on Wednesday, Boedigheimer wrote.

Through its investigation and use of video cameras at the hospital, the email states, Walla Walla police tracked down the driver of the vehicle that dropped off the victim and gathered what additional “scant information” about the shooting they could.

According to the email, Milton-Freewater police were given the report from Walla Walla police at approximately 12:47 p.m. on Wednesday and went to investigate the area for shell casings and any other available evidence, though none was found. Officers spoke with neighbors, who said they didn’t hear a gunshot, and the department’s 911 logs showed no reports of gunshots on Tuesday or Wednesday.

The investigation remains open and no suspects have been identified at this time.

Club turns Christmas trees into cash for local youths

By ALEX CASTLE
East Oregonian

PENDLETON — Those in Pendleton looking for a place to dispose of their wilting Christmas trees don’t have to go far.

For the next three weeks, the Pendleton City Club is running a tree recycling service in an empty parking lot at Southwest Frazier and 13th Street to the east of the Pendleton Early Learning Center in hopes of raising more funds for the youth activities it supports in the city.

“We just try to be helpful to as many kids as we can,” said Bob Chambers, who is the club’s former president and has been a member for more than 20 years. “And it’s a convenience for people to not have to haul their trees around.”

The club set up its space on Thursday and will be in the lot to collect trees from roughly 7:30 a.m. until 8:30 p.m. every day for the next three weeks or so, Chambers said. There’s no fee for dropping off a tree, though the club is hoping to meet its yearly goal of raising between \$1,600 to \$1,700 through donations

during its service.

The club collected two trees and \$23 on Thursday within the first few hours of opening.

“People give anywhere from \$20 to \$1, down to the change in their ashtray,” Chambers said. “If someone doesn’t have anything to give, we’ll still take their tree.”

Chambers said the group usually collects hundreds of trees, and then Kelsey Garton Tree Service donates its labor and wood chipper to turn the trees into mulch and compost after the three weeks are up.

“It beats burning them,” Chambers said.

The Pendleton City Club is a group of about 40 fathers volunteering to raise money to support youth activities in the city. Much of the money, Chambers said, is donated to youth athletics for equipment and other costs. The group has also donated money to the city’s parks and rec program that hosts free movies in the park, he said, and in total has worked with as many as 20 groups throughout the city for a variety of programs.

Aside from the drive to serve and support their community, the club has some fun

during its tree recycling service, too.

On Thursday, the club raised a tent and, thanks to one satellite-equipped RV owned by a city club member, is hoping to be set up with food, drinks and football during the holiday stretch while they man the lot.

The club previously ran its tree recycling service in a lot by Fallen Field behind the Pendleton Convention Center, Chambers said, but it was difficult for people to find or see when driving by. This year, he’s hoping the added visibility will bring an increase in donations as well.

“People get pretty generous,” Chambers said. “Even if it’s just a couple of bucks. It all helps.”

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