

# Helping after the holidays

By JESSICA POLLARD  
East Oregonian

UMATILLA COUNTY — Each holiday season, fund-raisers and donation drives aid the missions of nonprofit organizations throughout the community. But what happens when the season of giving is over?

“A lot of people during the holidays are reuniting with family, they have a sense of community and feel the need to donate,” said Kathryn Chaney, executive director of Domestic Violence Services in Umatilla County. “After the holidays, there might be a lull.”

But the ebb and flow isn’t a bad thing for an organization providing support to domestic violence survivors. After all, the amount of clothing needed to support people through the winter months is a little higher than what’s required other times of the year.

“We always need things throughout the year — underwear, sanitary products, blankets,” Chaney said. “This time of year, we also need coats and hats.”

She added that because holidays can be cold, and a particularly emotional time of year, the need for shelter away from a domestic violence situation can be heightened.

“It’s emotionally gratifying to have a place to go this time of year,” she said. “It’s a good feeling.”

For Eastern Oregon Mission’s Agape House in Hermiston, the story is a little different.

“November and December are our biggest months for people to give,” said Cathy Putnam, interim director of the organization.

Each year, Agape House is the site of Christmas Express, a program put on by city employees to provide people in need with gifts and food. Usually, the event reaches 500 families. Putnam said this year, the event served fewer than 400, and the organization is not sure why.

Putnam said Agape House



EO file photo  
**Volunteer Doug Alvarez loads a box of food into the back of a vehicle during the Christmas Express on Dec. 17, 2018, at Agape House in Hermiston.**

is in awe of how generous the community is in providing support to the organization.

“We’re just stewards of what is given to us,” she said.

Putnam added that Agape House’s needs are often greatest, not during the holidays, but during fall.

“At the beginning of the school year, we’re really in need of school clothes,” she said. “A lot of times parents won’t have the furniture they need when they’re new to town.”

And when the organization is accepting larger items like furniture, Putnam said, they’ve been increasingly careful about what they accept.

“We’re trying to be good stewards; if it’s not usable, we have to pay to get it taken away,” she said. “We’re asking people to think about if it’s something they would still use.”

Marilyn Johnson, who coordinates the Outreach Food Pantry in Pendleton, said this winter the Pendleton School District donated nearly 4,000 pounds of food to the organization.

“We get these massive inflows,” she said. “But this community always has donated food throughout the year. We get donations almost daily.”

Johnson said the need in Pendleton is increasing — not just this December, but every day.

“We have not had one shift in 2019 that hasn’t seen newcomers,” she said. “A lot

of them have been here for a while in the community.”

She added that monthly shipments from the Oregon Food Bank branch at CAPECO helps bolster the rise and fall of seasonal donations.

“That’s the one dependable shipment we know we’re going to get,” she said.

It’s not all human needs organizations that see upticks in giving during the holidays.

Michelle Glynn, manager at Pendleton Animal Welfare Shelter, noted December is a time of heavy donations to the organization.

“I’ve seen quite an increase during the holidays. We need all the donations we can get, and especially during the spring,” she said.

Each spring, PAWS especially needs cat litter due to an influx of kittens.

And while the donations flow freely during winter, she said the adoption and surrender rates stay roughly the same.

Fuzzball Animal Rescue in Hermiston has received a few calls about people looking to surrender their pets, and the organization has picked up a few strays near Christmastime, too, board member Robin Barker said.

But adoptions are slow.

“People are looking for puppies and kittens at Christmas, and most of our rescues are older than that,” she said. “We’re terribly overloaded. The community is very supportive of us, but people don’t want to adopt (animals).”

# Ducks take flight



Staff photo by Ben Lonergan  
**Ducks take flight over Clearview Pond in Pendleton on Friday morning. The small pond, located near Eastern Oregon Correctional Institute, was deeded to Clearview Disability Resource Center by Gale and Eileen Marshal for the development of a wheelchair-accessible fishing hole in 2018.**

## BRIEFLY

### Police find missing Hermiston woman

HERMISTON — The Umatilla County Sheriff’s Office located a Hermiston woman on Friday after she went missing earlier that morning.

Marlene Jackson, 83, was found safe and was with family Friday after walking down her driveway at West Nelson Lane around 1:30 a.m. and not returning.

Authorities initially sent out a press release asking for the public to be on the lookout for Jackson, who had been last seen by a family member wearing a dark blue jacket and plaid pajama pants, black tennis shoes, and was carrying her purse.

### M-F library to host census job recruitment event

MILTON-FREEWATER — A Census job recruitment meet-and-greet is planned at the

Milton-Freewater Public Library for those who would like to work as census takers.

The event will be held Wednesday, Jan. 15, 2020, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the library’s Albee Room, 8 S.E. Eighth St.

The Census is hiring people ages 18 and over, and training will begin in late January and early February. The job runs through July and August, and pays \$16 per hour and 58 cents per mile.

Those interested in applying, but not able to attend the event in Milton-Freewater, can call 855-JOB-2020, or apply online at 2020census.gov/jobs.

### Oregon Emergency Communications tax rate to increase

SALEM — The Oregon Emergency Communications tax rate will increase from 75 cents to \$1 beginning Jan. 1. This is the first increase to the 911 tax

since 1995.

Phone companies and retailers are required to collect the tax and pay it to the Oregon Department of Revenue. The 911 tax provides about 24% of the total operating costs for 911 centers in Oregon.

Examples of products or services subject to the 911 tax include landline telephone service, voice over internet protocol (VoIP) service, and wireless telephone prepaid or postpaid service.

Examples of products or services not subject to the 911 tax include phone accessories, such as batteries, chargers and phone covers as well as ringtones and long-distance phone cards.

For more information on the state 911 program and how Oregon 911 tax revenue is used, see “Emergency Communications Tax” on the Oregon Office of Emergency Management website: [www.oregon.gov/oem/911/Pages/911-Tax-Distribution.aspx](http://www.oregon.gov/oem/911/Pages/911-Tax-Distribution.aspx).

— EO Media Group

# TRCI hires new superintendant

By JESSICA POLLARD  
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UMATILLA — Tyler Blewett’s days as the acting superintendent at Two Rivers Correctional Institution are over.

Blewett is here to stay.

Last week, Oregon Department of Corrections Director Colette Peters announced in an email to staff that Blewett would take the reins of the prison without the “interim” title.

His appointment to superintendent follows a move into the interim leadership role in June, after former superintendent Troy Bowser went on administrative leave during an investigation and eventually resigned in September.

According to the DOC, Blewett began his career with Oregon DOC as a correctional officer at the Snake River Correctional Institution in Malheur County in 2007, eventually becoming a captain.

He moved on from the

security ranks at SRCI to take a plant manager role at the Umatilla prison before being named acting superintendent this summer.



Blewett

Blewett helped implement and continue multiple programs at TRCI, including the Peer-to-Peer Lead Mentorship Program.

“He has fostered positive working relationships amongst the different sections at TRCI and encourages them to work collaboratively on a daily basis,” stated Peters and deputy director at the DOC, Heidi Steward.

Bowser’s investigation launched in April, and was sparked by a number of com-

plaints about Bowser — hired to the position in 2017 — who reportedly made derogatory remarks about veteran staff at TRCI and a sexist comment aimed at a female employee. He also reportedly ignored a sexual assault reported by another employee. Following his resignation, Bowser declined to request a name-clearing hearing, according to the Oregon DOC.

At the time of his departure, Bowser made nearly \$160,000 a year, according to Betty Bernt, communications manager at the Oregon DOC. Blewett’s salary is currently more than \$130,000 a year.

Built in 2000, TRCI is a multi-custody institution in Umatilla, and houses around 1,800 adults according to the Oregon DOC.

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**Uncut Gems (R)**  
1:00\* 4:10 7:00 9:50

**Jumanji: The Next Level (PG13)**  
1:10p\* 4:00p 6:50p 9:30p

**Cats (PG)**  
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