

St. Anthony Hospital welcomes first baby

By KATHY ANEY
East Oregonian

PENDLETON — Somewhere Mal Hancock’s mother was smiling.

Hancock walked in the front door of St. Anthony Hospital on Friday and headed to the Family Birthing Center where Sierra and Cody Kenaga gazed at their newborn son. Sleeping serenely in Sierra’s arms was St. Anthony’s first baby of the decade, Sage Rockford, born at 9 p.m. on the dot Thursday.

He was perfect. Ten fingers, 10 toes. Twenty inches long. Six pounds, 6 ounces. The younger brother to a 3-year-old big sister.

Hancock was about to make it even better, if one could believe that was even possible. She peeked into the room and asked if she could enter.

“Oh, he’s so tiny,” Hancock gushed over Sage. “Look at him.”

The new parents invited her inside. Hancock wheeled in a cart with two fabric boxes, one adorned by a monkey and the other with an elephant. Inside was a treasure trove of new baby gifts. The contents included a teddy bear, a fleece romper, a hand-crocheted cap, gift cards, photo album and numerous other items.



Cody and Sierra Kenaga gaze at their newborn son. Sage, the first baby of the decade at St. Anthony Hospital, was born Thursday at 9 p.m.

Hancock pulled a satiny white quilt from one of the boxes and laid it on Sierra’s lap. She explained.

“This quilt was handmade just for your baby by my mom’s best friend,” Hancock said. “My mom was a nurse here at the birth center years ago. One of her projects was gathering donations for the New Year’s baby. My mom passed away from cancer in November.”

Hancock’s mom, Josephine (Jo) Smith, gave up the project with sadness after she retired about 19 years ago, but always missed it. Before her death, her daughter made her a promise.

“I told her this was something I wanted to start back

up in her memory,” Hancock said. “She got tears in her eyes.”

After Smith’s death, Hancock got busy. She works as internal auditor for the Wildhorse Resort & Casino, so she didn’t have a lot of time. Family, friends and an assortment of businesses came through, however, and “I got twice as much as I thought I would.” A teenager knitted a cap for the baby and her mom’s friend (who insisted on remaining anonymous) created the quilt. Hancock held up a tiny T-shirt emblazoned with “I’m glad to be out, I was running out of womb.”

The couple laughed as they read the shirt.

BRIEFLY

State asks for help finding missing psychiatric patient

PENDLETON — Psychiatric patient Thaddeus Ziemplak has gone missing from his residential care facility in Pendleton.

Pendleton Police Chief Stuart Roberts said his department is doing what it can to locate Ziemplak, who was on an outing alone into the community on Sunday and “just never returned.”

Roberts said Psychiatric Security Review Board reported Ziemplak was stable but he has suffered from schizophrenia, and Roberts said that is concerning.

Ziemplak, who is in his mid-30s, ended up in state care after being found guilty except for insanity in 2004 for shooting and killing his mother in Eugene. He made news reports again in 2006 when he escaped from the Oregon State Hospital in Salem.

Roberts said given that Pendleton has free public transportation, Ziemplak could have hit the road.

“Whether he’s here or not, there is no way to say,” Roberts said.

City removes interim tag from Critchley’s title

PENDLETON — Jim Critchley is Pendleton’s new fire chief.

Critchley, an Arizona Fire Service Hall of Fame inductee, came to Pendleton in August to assume the job of interim fire chief. The new chief will be sworn in Tuesday night during the Pendleton City Council meeting.

“We’ve been very happy with the experience and professionalism shown by the chief over the last few months, so we’re very glad that he’s agreed to join our team on a long-term basis,” said City Manager Robb Corbett.

Critchley kindled his



Critchley

career with an EMT class, then worked as instructor, firefighter, EMT and security guard for private agencies. With the Tucson Fire Department, he made his way through the ranks from paramedic in 1988 to fire chief in 2011. He has collected numerous awards, including 2008 Chief Fire Officer of the Year by the Arizona Fire Chiefs Association and Arizona’s Bob Weber Lifetime Achievement Award in 2018.

Critchley served as representative on the State Fire Training Association and the Arizona Fire Chiefs Association, the Western Fire Chiefs Association board and the International Association of Fire Chiefs board.

He received an MBA from the University of Arizona, a bachelor’s degree in fire service management from Arizona State University and an AAS in fire science from Pima Community College.

He and his wife, Karen, have three adult children.

City recycling Christmas trees at Butte Park

HERMISTON — Hermiston residents looking for a place to dispose of their Christmas tree can drop them off at Butte Park.

The city of Hermiston is once again taking trees at the park, on the south side of the parking lot. No artificial trees will be accepted, and trees must be free of ornaments, lights, tinsel and other decorations.

Trees will be accepted through Jan. 31, after which RDO Equipment and Vermeer will assist the city in turning the trees into mulch to be used in city parks throughout the year.

Hermiston traffic stop yields grenade

HERMISTON — Hermiston Police Department called out the Oregon State Police bomb squad early Monday morning after an officer located a grenade inside a vehicle during a traffic stop.

Hermiston Police Chief Jason Edmiston said that he did not know yet whether the grenade was inert, but OSP will report back on its status after destroying it.

A few minutes after midnight, an officer stopped a 1992 Ford Explorer on West Beech Avenue. The driver fled on foot. After being unable to locate the driver, the officer checked the vehicle, where drugs, scales, a cellphone and grenade were found.

Per police protocol, the grenade was treated as possibly live and the area was blocked off, while OSP retrieved it and took it away for disposal.

HPD is working to determine who may have been the driver of the vehicle.

OSP investigating hit-and-run killing of woman near M-F

MILTON-FREEWATER — Oregon State Police are investigating a hit and run that killed a Walla Walla, Washington, woman near Milton-Freewater Sunday morning.

Alicia Bernhardt, 20, was struck and killed near milepost 31 on Highway 11 by what is believed to be a blue 2002 or 2003 Honda Accord that was traveling northbound, according to a press release. Police were contacted at about 3:30 a.m. and the vehicle fled the scene before emergency personnel arrived.

Bernhardt sustained fatal injuries and was pronounced dead.

The release stated that the Accord should have sustained damage to the front corner of its passenger side and is now missing its passenger-side mirror.



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Sheriff’s office investigating crash

New Year’s Day crash killed Hermiston teen

East Oregonian

UMATILLA COUNTY — The Umatilla County Sheriff’s Office has taken the lead role in investigating the crash that took the life of a Hermiston teenager on New Year’s Day.

Brett Jewett, 16, a sophomore at Hermiston High School, was killed in a two-vehicle car crash on Jan. 1 along Highway 207 outside of Echo. Last week, the sheriff’s office released limited information regarding the crash. Information released at the time by the sheriff’s office didn’t contain any details about the vehicles involved or the people driving them.

Umatilla County Sheriff Terry Rowan confirmed Monday the identities of the drivers.

Brett’s sister Madison Jewett, 18, of Hermiston, was driving the 2007 Gray Ford Escape he was a passenger in, and Rene Romero-Briseno, 60, of Heppner, was driving a 1999 Ford Expedition.

Madison Jewett was transported to Good Shep-

herd Hospital and released that night.

The sheriff’s office provided no other information, but a safety log entry from Jan. 2 referred to the crash as a “head-on collision.”

“I don’t know if I can provide anything more at this point. There’s a considerable amount of scientific data to gather to sort of put the pieces of the puzzle together. I’m hesitant to put anything else out at this time,” Rowan said.

He added that no citations have been issued and that the cause of the crash has yet to be determined because the investigation is ongoing.

Because the crash occurred on a state roadway, typically the Oregon State Police would take the reins in investigating. But law enforcement officials said that because Brett Jewett is the son of OSP Trooper Brian Jewett, the sheriff’s office has been named the lead agency instead.

Rowan said that the office is working in cooperation with OSP, and that two accident reconstruction teams are currently working to determine what may have caused the fatal crash.

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