

Native son moves into interim principal role

Mario Uribe will step into role for the 2020-21 school year

By SHEILA HAGAR
Walla Walla Union-Bulletin

MILTON-FREEWATER — A native son has been appointed interim principal at McLoughlin High School.

Mario Uribe will step into the role for the 2020-21 school year, said Superintendent Aaron Duff.

Uribe temporarily fills the position that opens June 30 with the previously announced resignation of Principal Mindi Vaughan.

Uribe is vice principal at Mac-Hi, a position he started this school year. The educator is the Milton-Freewater Unified School District’s first Latino administrator in anyone’s recent memory, Duff said when he hired Uribe.

After arriving in Oregon from Mexico at age 8, Uribe grew up in Milton-Freewater, wrestled for and graduated from Mac-Hi, a fact that pleases Duff.

“We are excited that we have an internal person already established at Mac-Hi who can help with all of the COVID-19 uncertainty that has happened this school year and that may spill into next year,” the superintendent said.

Rebuilding the post-pandemic high school community will be a top priority in his interim position, Uribe said Thursday.

“We will have to take it easy, slow down and make sure we are checking in with students ... just hav-

ing some social time when we can interact and catch up,” he said.

Uribe said after the months of Zoom-centric student and staff relationships, people will have to relearn to be in the same classroom, and his team will need to examine rules and procedures to see what makes sense in getting teens back into participating and learning.

Taking some time to help students readjust to the physical school setting will help them adapt faster, he said, acknowledging those kinds of conversations will happen in every school district.

Duff said Uribe has had a positive experience in his year at Mac-Hi and knows the new interim role requires much learning, listening and continuing to build a positive school culture.

Uribe said in addition to debriefing students from the current health crisis, he’ll work to make school a safe environment, build connections with families and the community and expand opportunities to get students ready for college and career.

Before coming to the Milton-Freewater district, Uribe taught in Walla Walla Public Schools’ dual language program for seven years. He earned a bachelor’s degree in criminal justice from the University of Idaho and two master’s degrees in education and administration from Heritage University. Uribe also coached wrestling and managed a soccer club.



Uribe

Dancers perform down street with police escort

By KATHY ANEY
East Oregonian

PENDLETON — If not for coronavirus, the dozen or so dancers would have been busy traveling to Portland on Friday evening for a big dance competition.

Instead, they strutted and twirled and leaped their way down Byers Avenue on the way to the home of Jr. Jam studio owner Debbie Kishpaugh. Some held signs with loving sentiments for their sidelined instructor.

“We love and miss you lots,” said one sign. “Even though it was cut short, this year was so amazing.”

More than a month ago, COVID-19 ripped the dancers from classes and rehearsals. Onstage New York, a regional competition to qualify for nationals later in the



Staff photo by Kathy Aney
Jr. Jam dancers hop in unison during a surprise performance Friday for studio owner and instructor Debbie Kishpaugh in front of her Southeast Pendleton home.

summer, and other competitions gave way to social distancing. Next year seemed a long time away.

So, dance mom Chantell Reid came up with the idea of dancing to Kishpaugh’s home to give the coach some love. They also would sing Happy Birthday to Kishpaugh’s daughter, Piper Kish-

paugh, another instructor at the school.

School Resource Officer Lance Zaugg, of the Pendleton Police Department, led the procession. He alighted from his patrol car, climbed several steps to the porch and knocked. Kishpaugh opened the door and gave Zaugg a quizzical look.

“Would you mind stepping outside?” he said.

Kishpaugh seemed momentarily flummoxed, then grinned as she caught sight of the dancers moving up the street toward her. The beat of familiar music flowed into her eardrums. She moved closer, then grabbed her phone and began videoing.

Carefully spaced, the dancers moved to the music dressed in costumes for the routines they would have performed that weekend. One of the older dancers, Kirsten Mendel, wearing dental headgear for a routine called “Smile,” blew Kishpaugh a kiss.

“That was awesome,” Kishpaugh said when her dancers got close. “You look like a million bucks.”

If all goes well, she told them, they would be back together in a month. They would gather at the studio and get to work.

For now, air hugs all around.

BRIEFLY

Public housing authorities to receive COVID-19 aid

WASHINGTON — U.S. Sens. Ron Wyden and Jeff Merkley announced Monday that 21 public housing authorities throughout Oregon, including the Umatilla County Housing Authority, will receive more than \$5.7 million in grants to help with tenant-based rental assistance needs during the COVID-19 pandemic.

“Oregonians battling the multiple economic challenges triggered by this public health crisis need to know there’s support available when they’re staying at home and fighting to keep a roof over their heads,” Wyden said in a press release. “I am gratified these local housing authori-

ties are receiving this much-needed assistance to help the renters counting on them in Oregon.”

The Umatilla County Housing Authority, which provides public housing for Gilliam, Morrow, Umatilla, and Wheeler counties, will receive more than \$45,000 in aid.

“Oregon’s housing crisis is being made all the more urgent by a public health emergency, during which Oregonians are facing economic uncertainty and should stay home as much as possible to keep our communities safe,” Merkley said. “I’m glad we’re getting these grants out to help renters keep roofs over their heads during this pandemic, but let’s make no mistake — this problem predates the pandemic and will be

with us until we put in place bold solutions that ensure every Oregonian has a decent place they can afford to live.”

Umatilla County adds 11 more coronavirus cases

UMATILLA COUNTY — The county’s COVID-19 cases continue to climb as Umatilla County Public Health announced 11 new cases Monday, bringing the county’s total to 70.

All of the latest patients were close contacts of previously confirmed cases and all are recovering from home in self-isolation. One patient diagnosed with coronavirus remains in the hospital.

A confirmed COVID-19 case has killed one person in the county and active cases

outnumber recovered patients 42 to 27.

The latest spate of cases pushes Umatilla County further up the leaderboards for positive case rate. According to data compiled by Lane County Public Health, Umatilla County is in a near-statistical tie with Washington County for the third highest confirmed cases per 100,000 population.

The county is declining to release demographic and location information for individual cases, but the most significant concentrations of cases are in Hermiston, Umatilla and Pendleton.

According to the public health department, a total of 817 tests have been conducted in Umatilla County, with 70 yielding positive results.

—EO Media Group

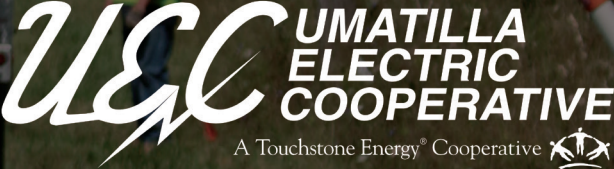


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