

Grant blazes path for summer fire position

Eli Hernandez spent three months with Pilot Rock Fire District as seasonal employee

By TAMMY MALGESINI
For the East Oregonian

PILOT ROCK — As a first-grader watching firefighters battle a blaze at his family’s Pendleton home, Eli Hernandez knew what he wanted to do for a living.

Fast forward 15 years later and the 21-year-old just finished up a three-month position as the Pilot Rock Fire District summer seasonal employee. Hernandez, who has been a volunteer with the department for a little more than three years, was thrilled with the opportunity to get paid to work as a firefighter. But even more, he said the posi-



Stanton



Ben Lonergan/East Oregonian

Eli Hernandez poses for a picture outside of the Pilot Rock Fire District building in Pilot Rock on Monday, Oct. 12, 2020.

tion provided him with the chance to help his community in the best way possible. “I consider deep down in my heart Pilot Rock to be my community,” Hernandez said. “It was nice to help the community and I want to do that wherever I go.” After gaining approval

from the Pilot Rock Fire District board of directors, fire chief Scott Stanton wrote a grant request for funding to help pay for the position. The Special Districts Association of Oregon awarded the matching grant, which resulted in the ability to pay Hernandez to be onsite at the

fire hall during regular business hours Monday through Friday. Stanton and Pilot Rock Mayor Virginia Carnes, who also serves on the fire district board, said it was a great benefit to the community to have the station manned during the week. Stanton said choos-

ing Hernandez for the position was a no-brainer because he had the familiarity and necessary qualifications. “We’re an all-volunteer organization and having someone at the station having the equipment ready when a call comes in is huge,” Carnes said. “It’s been good for Eli, too, because he can determine if he wants to pursue fire services as a career. He was able to get more experience.” “He’s already a Pilot Rock volunteer, so he knows the area and equipment,” Stanton added. Having someone onsite throughout the week, Stanton said, helped with things like checking the vehicles on a regular basis, building and grounds maintenance, having someone on hand to answer citizens’ questions and even something as simple as being available for deliveries. Especially with the busy summer fire season, Stanton said it was nice not having to track down a package that was being shipped to the fire district — Hernandez was right there to receive it.

“I made sure our equipment and apparatus was up to standards and ready to go on fire scenes,” Hernandez said. “I also did a lot of cleaning and I painted the station — it hadn’t been painted for awhile.” Carnes said it was very helpful to have the financial support for a summer seasonal employee. In addition, she said the fire district was able to evaluate the benefits of having someone onsite during regular business hours. Stanton and Carnes hope to figure out a way to fund such a position in the future. As for Hernandez, the summer experience solidified his resolve to continue pursuing needed education and training to obtain a position as a full-time firefighter. He’s also interested in participating in a program to become an emergency medical technician (EMT). For more information about volunteer firefighting opportunities, contact Rich Carnes, training coordinator/division chief, at 541-567-8822 or rcarnes@ucfd1.com.

Free help is available for Medicare open enrollment

Open enrollment period runs until Dec. 7

By JADE MCDOWELL
East Oregonian

HERMISTON — Medicare open enrollment starts Thursday, Oct. 15, and Good Shepherd Health Care System is offering area residents free help in finding the right plan.

Jessica Reker, director of education for Good Shepherd, said the hospital won’t be able to offer its usual Medicare events because of COVID-19, but people can sign up for one-on-one appointments in person, over the phone or via video chat through Senior Health Insurance Benefits Assistance. Trained counselors can help people sign up for Medicare for the first time or check to see if they would benefit from any changes to the coverage they have. The open enrollment period, which runs from Oct. 15 to Dec. 7, is the only time of the year peo-

ple can make changes to their coverage. Darla Irwin, senior services coordinator for Good Shepherd, said every year new plans come on the market, coverage and pricing for existing plans changes, and patients often have changes in their medications that might be better covered under a different plan. This year, for example, the federal government is rolling out changes to Medicare to offer more affordable options for people on insulin. And Eastern Oregon residents will have a new Medicare Advantage option through Summit Health, which was recently formed by several hospitals in the region. “This is a good time to check what’s new,” Irwin said. “I know a couple of the new plans available this year are a little cheaper.” To get help figuring out what coverage works best for them, patients can call the hospital’s education department at 541-667-3509 to schedule an appointment. “If someone does not want to come into the office, they can do it virtually or

by phone,” Reker said. “We will mail them everything they need.” For their appointment, patients should have their Medicare card and a list of their current medications with them. If they have letters from the Social Security office or Department of Human Services regarding their coverage, those are helpful as well. It will also save time if they have already created a login for www.medicare.gov and have their password and user name ready, but counselors can assist with that if needed. Reker said they expect a rush of appointment-making near the end of the open enrollment period, and recommended that people make their appointment soon to avoid a backlog. For people who wish to sign up for Medicare on their own or want to be better prepared for their appointment with a counselor, a “Medicare 101” video is available on the Good Shepherd Health Care System YouTube page at [youtube.com/watch?v=giwh0C-zlsc](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=giwh0C-zlsc).

A golden glow



Greg Lehman/Walla Walla Union-Bulletin

The sun breaks briefly below some low-lying clouds as it sets beyond the Spofford Elevator north of Milton-Freewater last week. Rain and wind are in the immediate forecast, according to the National Weather Service, with a high-wind watch issued for the Pendleton area on Tuesday, Oct. 13, from early afternoon through the evening with sustained winds 35-45 mph and some higher gusts expected. Milder winds are likely to continue into Oct. 14, but by Oct. 15 the sun should be out, with temperatures rising back into the high 60s.

LOCAL BRIEFING

Fourth natural resource leadership class announced

SALEM — Twenty-three professionals from around the state were selected as members of Oregon’s fourth Resource Education and Ag Leadership (REAL) class, according to a press release. The class includes representatives from Eastern Oregon, such as Chad Mueller of Oregon State University and Eastern Oregon University, Ted Netter of Lower Bridge Hay and Cattle in Terrebonne, Jacob Putney of the Oregon State University Extension in Baker City and Randi Svaty of Northwest Farm Credit Services in Ontario. “The participants

selected are well-qualified applicants and reflect a balanced mix of resource producers, foresters, transportation professionals, agri-businesses representatives, University faculty, and non-profit employees,” the organization’s program director Greg Addington stated in the release. REAL Oregon brings together a mix of operators, managers, suppliers, service providers, affiliated professionals and leaders in agriculture, fishing, forestry, finance and transportation for a series of five sessions around the state. “The annual leadership program exposes this cross-section of professionals to the wide range of Oregon’s geography, economy, and culture through train-

ing in board governance, communication skills, conflict resolution, government interaction, public policy work, critical thinking, media relations, professional presentations, public speaking, relationship building, and other areas,” the release stated. The class will begin the program in November with graduation slated for March 2021. The organization will begin recruiting for its fifth class in winter, according to the release. — EO Media Group

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1:00p 3:50p 6:40p

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2:00p 7:00p

Hocus Pocus (PG)
4:30p 7:20p

Possessor (NR)
1:40p 7:40p

Alone (R)
1:20p 5:00p

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OBSTETRICS AND GYNECOLOGY

Please Welcome Christopher Bowen, DO, OB/GYN

Good Shepherd Health Care System is pleased to welcome Dr. Christopher Bowen, OB/GYN, to Good Shepherd Women’s Center.

Dr. Bowen received the Teaching OB/GYN Resident of the Year in 2017. He is trained in da Vinci Robotics for surgeries such as hysterectomies.

Welcoming New Patients

GOOD SHEPHERD WOMEN’S CENTER

541.667.3801

620 NW 11th Street, Suite 103
Hermiston, OR 97838

“Trust is an integral part of patient care. My goal is to give my patients the peace of mind that their trust will never be underestimated or abused.”
-Dr. Bowen



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