

Barn: ‘It’s an agrarian cathedral’

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venue. The move would provide funds to maintain the building.

“It took her years to convince me to take out wood my grandfather had put there,” he said. “It was a hard sell.”

Preston winced as he thought back, but said the wisdom of his wife’s advice finally soaked in. Removing the old chute, he realized, was much like cutting off a man’s gangrenous finger to save his life. They removed the chute and refurbished the space with a glossy, tongue-and-groove floor. The wedding venue opened in 2008. Until the pandemic, about 25 couples each wedding season have started their married lives in the barn.

Last year, Preston retired from teaching agriculture at Blue Mountain Community College after 28 years at the institution. Arlene, a former teacher and mortgage loan processor, continues to function as Winn Homestead’s master landscaper and bookkeeper after handing off the client relationship management and marketing duties to her daughter.

Kendra embraces her new role, while marveling at her circular journey. She had happily departed Weston after graduating high school in 2003, not expecting to live full-time in the area again. She earned a bachelor’s degree in international relations and studied in Latin America, married Tim, then headed to Washington, D.C., to begin her dream job. For several years, she shepherded members of Congress and White House staffers on foreign policy trips to Latin America. Tim worked as an IT consultant on the Hill.

Five years ago, the couple moved to Portland where Tim continued his job remotely. Waverly, now 4, arrived. Kendra did research, writing and marketing for Stillwater Associates, a transportation fuels consulting firm, and ran her own photography business, Kendra Joy Photography, both of which she continues.

Then came an unexpected proposition from Preston and Arlene. They wanted to retire over time and transfer ownership in the wedding business



Kathy Aney/East Oregonian
Waverly Seymour plays in her family’s 104-year-old gothic arch barn on Oct. 1, 2020. The vintage barn is being used as a wedding venue.



Kathy Aney/East Oregonian
A cross brace in the lower level of the Winn barn bears the name of “GEO. W. WINN, WESTON, OREGON.”

(called the Winn Homestead Events) and the family farm to the next generation.

“Often in agriculture, the older generation is not willing to turn loose assets until late in life, oftentimes not until their 80s,” Preston said. “The younger generation doesn’t have the opportunity to shape those assets into whatever their vision is. Arlene and I see that as kind of a tragedy.”

After careful consideration, Kendra and Tim bought in.

“It all came together

rather quickly,” Kendra said. “We sold our house and moved just in time for the pandemic.”

Then Tim was laid off from his IT job. Bookings dropped to just nine as couples cancelled and postponed because of the virus. The couple, along with Preston and Arlene, channeled their energies into continuing to renovate a 408-square-foot house where George R. Winn and his wife Imogene Sloane Winn honeymooned and later raised Preston and his

two older siblings, turning the small home into a bridal cottage. They also updated a tiny bunkhouse on the property to a groom and groomsman ready room.

The magnum opus is a new cedar roof for the barn. Helix wheat farmer and roofer Matt Wood and members of his crew (which include Preston and Tim) donned roofing harnesses last Monday and started removing the barn’s aging tamarack (western larch) shingles. Wood, an aficionado of old barns like this one, said he feels a sense of reverence when he looks at the structure.

“It’s an agrarian cathedral,” Wood said. “Barns, to me, are more than old buildings. It’s nice to see someone committed to keeping a barn alive and functional, even if it means repurposing.”

Wood said he feels honored to work on the barn, which landed on the National Historic Register in 2011.

“It’s like working on a ’32 Packard,” he said. “It’s a classic. It has beautiful lines.”

Kendra, now 35, said her appreciation of the historic barn has increased since childhood.

“As a kid, I didn’t see the value of the history,” she said. “My perspective has changed a little bit. I now see how cool the history is. It’s tangible; you can walk where your ancestors walked. There are a lot of stories in those walls.”



Ben Lonergan/East Oregonian, File
The Umatilla County Public Health Department is expecting to receive about 1,000 Abbot BinaxNOW rapid COVID-19 tests as a part of the state’s new testing strategy.

COVID:

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this outbreak is spreading, you can test a lot of people in a very short period of time.”

There’s also new availability for take-home COVID tests for those who can afford it.

According to a press release, Safeway and Albertsons stores in Oregon are offering saliva-based tests that can be picked up or delivered, and then mailed to a lab for results within approximately 72 hours. The tests can be ordered from local stores at schedulesafeway.com and cost \$139.99 out of pocket. Insurance can’t be billed for the cost, the release stated.

The boost in testing supplies comes as the number of people being tested for the virus locally keeps dropping for reasons that are unclear to Fiumara and the county

health department.

“It seems like testing overall is continuing to drop, but the capacity is still there,” he said. “We’re not actually sure what the rationale is.”

From June 21 to Aug. 1, the Oregon Health Authority reported that more than 1,000 people were tested for the virus each week in Umatilla County. Based on testing data published on the state’s public data dashboards as of Friday, Oct. 9, an average of just over 600 people were tested for the virus per week between Aug. 2 and Oct. 3.

Fiumara said the county was still awaiting final word on when the new rapid tests would be arriving and exactly how many are on the way, but for now the plan is to find the most effective way to use them before they expire in five months.

“More tests is always good, we’ve just got to make sure we use them right,” he said.

Race:

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they’re overreaching” by being over-involved in day-to-day operations rather than focusing on policy setting.

“We have great employees, and need to let them work,” he said.

Doherty said he is running for another term on the board of commissioners because he has greatly enjoyed his time on the board and wants to continue the work he has started.

“I probably have more passion for the job now than I did when I got started,” he said. “I just love the work.”

Despite being a first-term commissioner, Doherty was elected as president of the Association of Oregon Counties, and said he has been able to be a voice for Morrow County in the state and work with state and federal lawmakers.

He was born and raised in the very southernmost part of Morrow County and now lives in Boardman, but said

he doesn’t like to ever use the terms “north county” and “south county.”

“If you continue to talk in the language of north county and south county, it just drives divisiveness,” he said.

That being said, he recognized that different communities in Morrow County face different challenges, and he wants to see communities, such as Lexington — which he described as in danger of being unincorporated and “absorbed” into the county — get the extra attention they need to improve. He said he is particularly interested in beefing up transit options in that area.

Peterson and Doherty participated in a candidate forum hosted by the Boardman Chamber of Commerce on Oct. 2, where they answered questions from the moderator and from participants on subjects, such as the most pressing infrastructure needs in the county who their top campaign contributors are. Video of the hour-long forum can be found online at www.facebook.com/ChamberBoardman.

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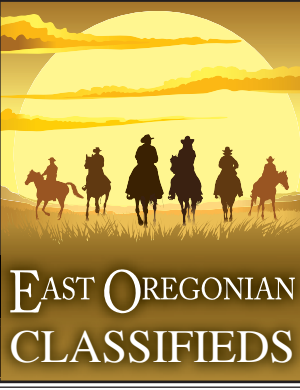
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