

# New superintendent at Two Rivers Correctional Institution

By **BRYCE DOLE**  
East Oregonian

UMATILLA — The Oregon Department of Corrections has announced the hiring of a new superintendent at Two Rivers Correctional Institution in Umatilla, according to a press release.

Erin Reyes, a former law enforcement, state government and public safety official with more than 25 years of experience, was announced as the new superintendent on Feb. 22.

“I never would have imagined my life and career path would lead me to where I am today,” Reyes said.

Reyes steps into the role after Tyler Blewett resigned in December 2020 after holding the position for a year.

Soon after, the prison was rocked by one of the largest COVID-19 outbreaks seen in Oregon prisons since the pandemic began.

Hundreds of adults in custody and dozens of staff fell ill in December and January — more than any prison in Oregon during

that time period. Fifteen AICs, who tested positive at TRCI during the outbreak, died.

Now, the prison, along with all other prisons in Oregon, is working to vaccinate all its AICs against COVID-19, just as Reyes assumes her role.

Reyes earned her bachelor’s degree in business management and a master’s degree in organizational management from the University of Phoenix. Her career began at the Oregon State Police, where she worked for 18 years and

was promoted from state trooper to sergeant before joining the Oregon State Police Officers Association, the press release said.

Reyes later joined the faculty teaching criminal justice courses at the University of Phoenix.

In 2013, Reyes joined the Oregon Department of Human Services as a caseworker in the Child Protective Services Division. Three years later, she became a parole officer in Lincoln County. And in 2017, she joined the Department of Corrections, where she worked as an inves-

tigator and is currently working as the acting investigations administrator on the employee services team.

Reyes said earning the position of superintendent is a privilege.

“As superintendent, I look forward to continuing to grow as a professional and work with the great men and women who work hard every day to make TRCI the great institution it is,” Reyes said.

In her free time, Reyes enjoys equestrian and spending time outdoors with her family, the press release said.

# Pool slide gets extreme makeover

By **ANNIE CHARNLEY EVELAND**  
Walla Walla Union-Bulletin

MILTON-FREEWATER — Tyler Hoel usually paints automobiles, not amphibians.

But when a well-loved, frog-shaped, fiberglass pool slide in Milton-Freewater needed a facelift, he was up to the task.

“It caught me off guard,” TYCO Body & Paint owner Hoel said of Milton-Freewater Public Works Department contacting him about the refurbishing job.

“The frog’s aged over the years, so city Public Works asked me to fix the wear and tear, and make it look new.”

The frog slide was one of the original pieces of equipment installed in 1996 at the Joe Humbert Family Aquatic Center in Yantis Park, Public Works Superintendent Brian Steadman said.

Staff took the frog out of commission before last season. The finish on its tongue especially, but also its body, had deteriorated from extensive use and sun damage, Steadman said.

The city couldn’t justify the cost to replace the frog or send it back to the manufacturer for a facelift, he said. Instead, Hoel gave the city a reasonable quote for sanding and restoration.

“Tyler did an outstanding job, and the frog slide is safely stored just inside the main entrance,” Steadman said. “We plan to reinstall the frog after the plaster pool resurfacing is complete. We hope the pool, along with the frog slide, can be back open for use in June.”

Hoel’s shop mostly handles auto work.

But fixing the frog “was nice to have as a change to everyday ‘paint the bumper, paint the door, fix the car.’ A



Greg Lehman/Walla Walla Union-Bulletin

**Tyler Hoel sits on the restored fiberglass frog slide currently just inside the Joe Humbert Family Aquatic Center at Yantis Park in Milton-Freewater.**

different project,” he said. “It was fun. It was a chance to get into airbrushing again, a good refresher course and to see that I still had the skill.”

Airbrushing uses fine motor work with a little nozzle the size of a writing pen.

“It’s like a tiny paint gun, like drawing, just with paint,” Hoel said.

And through his work, details, such as the frog’s eyes, toes, haunches and the bumps on its back came to the fore.

A popular fixture, the 6-foot-tall amphibian stretches about 10 feet long from the stairs at its tail end to the tip of its unfurled tongue, down which youngsters gleefully slide into the pool.

TYCO employee Gabe Garcia repaired surface chips, cracks and splits. Hoel strove to make it look factory fresh, hand sanding and repainting it.

“It was hard to judge some of the colors as it was so faded and sun beaten,” he said. “Does this color work or that color? I wanted to match the colors as close as possible to bring it

back to its original state.”

Hoel said he probably used 13 different hues, layering some to get proper shading and depth.

For example, the frog’s body is mint green, meadow green and John Deere green. Paint for the tongue is pastel pink. The eyes gleam with bronze, Harley vivid black, Olympic white and victory red. Other colors used to highlight its features are blue, tan and beige.

Hoel also applied anti-slip material on the stairs.

All told, it took about two weeks to complete — maybe 30 hours, Hoel said.

“I was happy to do it, just ‘cause a lot of people are going to see it, and it makes the aquatic center look better,” he said.

Hoel, 35, opened TYCO in late 2017, but got his start in the field in 2004. He attended Walla Walla Community College for two years, worked at Jim’s Body Shop in Milton-Freewater, then at Coachman Body & Frame Service in Walla Walla, Washington.

## LOCAL BRIEFING

### Legislative committee to hold hearings on CD-2 redistricting

SALEM — Residents of the 2nd Congressional District will get their first chance to comment on the upcoming redistricting process via video and teleconference later this month.

The Oregon Legislature is responsible for determining the boundaries of the sprawling district, which covers everything east of the Cascade Mountains, including Umatilla and Morrow counties.

In a joint press release, Sens. Bill Hansell of Athena and Tim Knopp of Bend, the two Republicans of the five-member Senate Committee on Redistricting, shared information on how residents could participate in the hearings.

The hearings will be held on March 10 from 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. and on March 20 from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. Participants can sign up for written or oral testimony at [oregonlegislature.gov/redistricting](http://oregonlegislature.gov/redistricting). If they don’t have access to the internet, they can call Patrick Brennan at 503-986-1674 or Michael Lantz at 503-986-1736 for further instructions.

If a resident has suggestions on redistricting, the senators reminded potential participants that the state requires, “as practicable as possible,” all congressional districts need to be contiguous, use existing geographical or political boundaries, have equal population, keep together “communities of common interest” and maintain connection through transportation links.

### Milton-Freewater Area Foundation gets new leadership

MILTON-FREEWATER — Linda Whiting has been chosen as the new director of the Milton-Freewater Area Foundation.

Whiting is executive director of Frazier Farmstead Museum, and will continue in that position while taking on the new leadership role, according to the foundation.

The philanthropic organization, founded in 1962, supports community youth and service clubs through scholarships and grants.

Whiting replaces Luis Alvarez, who served the Milton-Freewater Area Foundation for nearly five years. Alvarez helped direct funds to a wide variety of local causes during his tenure.

Whiting was an educator in Milton-Freewater Unified School District for more than 20 years and has led the historic Frazier Farmstead Museum for the past three years, the news release said.

Officials said combining Whiting’s two roles will work well, as the area foundation serves as trustee of the museum.

Whiting is excited to expand her service to the community.

“Providing support to the youth of our community is something near and dear to my heart, and it is an honor to be part of a charitable organization that helps our students pursue their lifelong goals through higher education,” she said.

—EO Media Group



Whiting

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