

EAST OREGONIAN

TUESDAY, JUNE 8, 2021

145th Year, No. 100

WINNER OF THE 2020 ONPA GENERAL EXCELLENCE AWARD

\$1.50

UMATILLA COUNTY

Sheriff's office mourns loss of deputy

East Oregonian

UMATILLA COUNTY — The Umatilla County Sheriff's Office identified Jason Post as the deputy who drowned Saturday, June 5, in Wallowa County.

Post was 34 and leaves behind a wife and baby girl.

The sheriff's office reported Post and three other adults entered a craft on the water near the Minam Store at Minam State Park and an accident threw them into the water.

"Deputy Jason Post did not reach shore and his body was found shortly afterward," according to a press release from the sheriff's office.

Post began his career in 2010 as a reserve officer for the Umatilla County Sheriff's Office and in 2013 was hired as a full-time patrol deputy. He was a field training officer and a mentor to many officers.

"He was well respected and

loved throughout the entire law enforcement community," the press release stated.

Umatilla County Parole and Probation in mid-April hired Post as a probation officer.

"He was known for his devotion to his family," according to the press release, "and he was very open about making the career change so he could focus on family and spend more time with them."



Post

Umatilla County sheriff's deputies and other law enforcement agencies escorted Post's body from the Loveland Funeral Chapel, La Grande, to home in Pendleton, where local law enforcement and first responders gathered to honor him.

"Thank you for the overwhelming support that was demonstrated by so many of our extended law enforcement family yesterday as we brought him home," the sheriff's office stated. "We express our deepest condolences to his entire

family. We are your family and our hearts are broken."

Umatilla County sheriff's Lt. Sterrin Ward on June 7 reported staff from the sheriff's office and parole and probation met that morning for a debrief of the events from the weekend.

"The family and agency are beginning the process of planning for a ceremony, but at this time no finalized announcements have been made," Ward reported. "We

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HERMISTON

VFW post's charter revoked

Members are now 'at large' and must have sponsor to join another VFW post

By JADE MCDOWELL
East Oregonian

HERMISTON — Local members of Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 4750 of Hermiston said the state VFW leadership revoked the post's charter.

The decision means members of the post are now "at large" members of the VFW and must have someone sponsor them if they want to join an adjacent post in Ione, Kennewick or Pendleton. According to Harold Roberts, a former post commander, the post has about \$600,000 in assets, including its building, cash and equipment. Roberts said all of that now belongs to the VFW Department of Oregon.

"That money was raised by local veterans, for local veterans, and it needs to stay in the community," he said.

The state post did not respond to multiple requests for comment, but a member of Post 4750 provided the East Oregonian with a copy of a letter dated May 17 from State Commander George Carroll, stating the charter had been revoked and the Hermiston post was no longer an official VFW post.

"If you have kept abreast of the evolving situation at the Post, it should not come as a surprise to you," he wrote.

The decision comes after a

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Ben Lonergan/East Oregonian

Sisters Sarah, left, and Emma House just received their second shot of the COVID-19 vaccine when a teammate on the Pendleton High School tennis team tested positive. Due to their vaccination status they did not have to quarantine while at least 12 of their teammates were required to do so, Sarah said.

'Everyone has their own options'

Local high school students question COVID-19 vaccination requirement

By BRYCE DOLE, JADE MCDOWELL AND ANTONIO SIERRA
East Oregonian

UMATILLA COUNTY — Sarah House had just gotten her second vaccine when her teammate on the Pendleton High School tennis team tested positive for COVID-19.

A week before, the team had been riding the bus together. She said at least 12 of her teammates were forced to quarantine — and just before districts.

"There were only like five people that went" to districts, said House, 16. "And it's because they were vaccinated or they weren't on the bus."

Because House and her sister, Emma, just had gotten the shot, they didn't have to quarantine. But one of her best friends did, and it was strange to be at school without her.

"It was just weird because we have a lot of the same classes," House said. "So she didn't come to school and she had to go online, which is weird, because I was used to her being there."

As schools continue to grapple with the pandemic, with outbreaks sending students briefly back to their homes to isolate, students face the question of whether or not to get vaccinated against COVID-19.

Health officials say vaccines — which are becoming more widely available for youth — are the best bet to keep students in school and to all but ensure a safe and normal fall 2021 semester.



Ben Lonergan/East Oregonian

Muriel Jones-Hoisington, a 17-year-old Pendleton High School student, says while she has chosen not to get the COVID-19 vaccine at this time, she believes it's ultimately up to the individual to do their own research and make the decision that works best for them.

"I do encourage students to get the vaccine," said Umatilla County Commissioner George Murdock, the liaison to the health department. "It will certainly change the picture and very likely help them for next year with respect to participation in athletics, let alone wearing masks. My guess is that the more of our young people who are vaccinated, probably the more freedom and flexibility they'll experience in the fall of 2021."

But with some students and families still skeptical of the shot, school districts are navigating a fine line between safety, education and families' individual choice.

"It's trying to be neutral and respect the rights of individual choice," said Pendleton School Superintendent Chris Fritsch, who



refrained from formally encouraging students to get vaccinated, saying the decision should be left to families. "But again, part of that is — with those choices could potentially come consequences."

Schools report cases

According to the Oregon Health Authority's weekly outbreak report, Umatilla County schools reported 71 student cases and 32 staff cases since the beginning of April, the first full month most county schools began offering in-person classes again.

State reports show a total of 21 students in the Hermiston School District tested positive for COVID-19, spread across six of its schools. Superintendent Tricia Mooney said based on the limited information the county health department gives the school district, it appears the virus isn't spreading through classrooms once one student falls ill.

"I think our precautions and safety measures are working, definitely," she said.

In all, 21 schools in Umatilla County, including middle and high school, reported cases since April, according to the state. Though most of those schools were from the Pendleton and Hermiston area, cases also were reported in Stanfield, Umatilla

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