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Umatilla County sticks with Community Counseling

Move comes after Lifeways protested county's decision

By **BRYCE DOLE**
East Oregonian



Murdock



Shafer

PENDLETON — The Umatilla County Board of Commissioners is sticking with its decision to award a contract for mental health and addiction services to Community

Counseling Solutions.

Lifeways, the county's previous provider of mental health services, protested the recent move. The board at its Wednesday, June 16,

meeting voted unanimously to override the protest.

Commissioners John Shafer and George Murdock made brief comments before casting their votes against Lifeways' objection, which criticized the county's decision and questioned the ability of Community Counseling to take on the new, larger role.

Shafer, the county's mental health liaison, was the first to recommend the county reject Lifeways' protest. Shafer was part of the

five-person committee that unanimously recommended CCS, a Heppner-based provider that serves four smaller Eastern Oregon counties, over Lifeways.

An educator, business person, law enforcement officer and county employees all served on the committee.

Shafer said the decision to go with CCS as the new provider will lead to "a better end product for mental health and behavioral health in Umatilla County." He said he was

excited to see CCS and Lifeways directors say they would be willing to work together in any way possible to provide care in the county.

"Although I was not directly involved in the decision, I do know that considering the possibility of a new provider has been a long time coming, based upon input we have received from law enforcement, medical facilities, educators and others who have deep

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COVID-19

Vaccine rates rise and cases decline

Fourth of July could lead to rise in COVID-19

By **BRYCE DOLE**
East Oregonian

PENDLETON — The ZIP code encompassing the city of Pendleton reported the largest uptick in COVID-19 vaccinations in the state during the past week, mostly due to a new batch of vaccine data that had yet to be reported to the Oregon Health Authority.

According to the state, the ZIP code reported 1,429 residents vaccinated for the first time in the past week, bringing the county's weekly total to 2,271. That's about three times as many as the previous week, as reported by The Oregonian/OregonLive.

The data, according to Joe Fiumara, the county's public health director, was largely from vaccinations at Yellowhawk Tribal Health Center from December 2020 through April 2021.

The health center held multiple mass vaccine clinics with the National Guard in the winter and spring, vaccinating thousands of residents. But the National Guard reports its data to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, officials have said, meaning that for months much of that data was not reported to the state.

The data comes amid a larger effort from state and county officials attempting to track down the county's true vaccination rate. In May, lawmakers reached out to Gov. Kate Brown's office, noting many county residents had been vaccinated either by tribal health officials or in Washington and voicing concerns the data wasn't being counted.

Though the new data represents

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Dena Summerfield, left, turns over "Flowers of Eastern Oregon" Monday, June 14, 2021, at Pendleton Art and Frame while working with Cherise Stewart Baker to frame a collection of works Blue Mountain Community College purchased from Crow's Shadow Institute of the Arts. Nixyaawii Community School students created "Flowers" during a printmaking class with Yatika Fields in 2019.

Ben Lonergan/East Oregonian

Artful effort

BMCC brings on Native works to reflect its home

By **ANTONIO SIERRA**
East Oregonian

PENDLETON — The Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation's ceded territory stretches to nearly every corner of Blue Mountain Community College's service area. Soon, the artwork featured in all of BMCC's five campuses will reflect that fact.

BMCC recently used more than \$60,000 in state grants to purchase, frame and install artwork made by American Indian artists from Crow's Shadow Institute of the Arts, a Umatilla Indian Reservation print studio and gallery.

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Dena Summerfield, right, frames "kahss K'wahyayis" by Shirod Younker on Monday, June 14, 2021, at Pendleton Art and Frame in preparation for its display at Blue Mountain Community College.

Ben Lonergan/East Oregonian

Candidate has story to tell

Washington state administrator subject of final BMCC presidential candidates forum

By **ANTONIO SIERRA**
East Oregonian

PENDLETON — Luca Lewis had a story to tell about Blue Mountain Community College, but not enough time to tell it.

Lewis, the vice president of student services at Whatcom Community College in Bellingham, Washington, opened his time at the BMCC presidential candidate forum Monday evening, June 14, detailing a road trip he took to visit all five of the college's campuses. Lewis was a last-minute addition to the slate of finalists after

the board of education learned late in the process that the search committee had identified a fourth candidate.

Lewis had just finished recounting his trip to Boardman when interim President Connie Green interjected to remind him their time was limited and he still had to field questions from the audience.

Nevertheless, Lewis was able to weave his experiences in Eastern Oregon into his answers from various community members. Through anecdotes, he painted a

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Ben Lonergan/East Oregonian, File

Blue Mountain Community College faces competition from community colleges in Pasco and Walla Walla. BMCC presidential candidate Luca Lewis told the college's board of education during a forum Monday, June 14, 2021, the institution is struggling to remain relevant with the people it serves.



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