

Umatilla tribes launch new full-service financial operation

East Oregonian

MISSION — The Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Reservation has opened a full-service financial operation.

Nixyaawii Community Financial Services held a ribbon cutting ceremony Tuesday, Aug. 10, and a public grand opening Aug. 11, complete with hot dogs and burgers. The entity is a Native Community Development Financial Institution loan fund that provides loans, homeownership assistance, adult financial education and more to members of the Umatilla Confederated Tribes, reservation residents and tribal employees. CDFI's are specialized financial institutions that serve geographically defined low-income communities and/or populations that lack access to financing.

Dave Tovey, executive director of Nixyaawii Community Financial Services, said this has been in the works for several years.

The tribes in 2015 conducted a community survey and a feasibility analysis in preparation for this new financial operation, and in 2019 the tribes named Tovey as the executive director.

Tovey said the financial organization secured IRS nonprofit status in early 2020, and soon after the



Ben Lonergan/East Oregonian

Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation Board of Trustees Chair Kat Brigham, second from left, and Kelly George, with the Nixyaawii Community Financial Services Board of Directors, right, cut the ribbon for the new NCFCS building Tuesday, Aug. 10, 2021 as Aaron Hines, NCFCS board member, left, and Oregon Secretary of State Shemia Fagan look on. The new NCFCS office is at 46440 Kusi Road, No. A-3, across Highway 331 from the Arrowhead Travel Plaza.

CTUIR Board of Trustees approved its business plan. Tovey explained that plan merged three tribal programs — Business Development Services, Housing Department's Homeownership Program and the Tribal Credit Program — under one roof.

Grants and donations exceeding a total of \$367,000 provided start-up funding until the approval of the 2021 budget, including \$175,000 from the Northwest Area Foundation and \$60,000 from the

Oregon Community Foundation.

Nixyaawii Community Financial Services is operating in the former location of the Dairy Queen in the Perennial Building off Highway 331 near the Arrowhead Truck Plaza. Renovations in the space allow for social distancing, Tovey said, including a separate waiting area and separate offices. NCFCS also kept the former restaurant's drive-thru to allow customers to conduct transitions on the go.

Tovey also said Nixyaawii Community Financial Services is in the process of becoming a Native Community Development Financial Institution.

"Native CDFIs are engines of opportunity, offering accessible funding for resourceful and resilient communities in Indian County," according to the tribes. "They weave partners, funding, and networks together to create lasting prosperity and opportunities shared by all."

Mosquitoes near Boardman found with West Nile virus

East Oregonian

BOARDMAN — The North Morrow Vector Control District in a press release reported it detected West Nile virus in mosquitoes at a testing site in Morrow County.

The mosquitoes are the first to test positive for the disease in Morrow County in 2021.

"North Morrow Vector Control District was notified that seven mosquito pools collected on the night of Tuesday, Aug. 3, tested positive for West Nile virus. The pools were collected in the east rural Boardman area," Greg Barron, manager of control district, said in a press release. "The area was treated with our truck mounted fogging units on Aug. 4 and again on the night of Aug. 9."

Barron said the vector control district trapped the Boardman area again the night of Aug. 10 and on Aug. 11 shipped mosquitoes for testing at the Oregon State University Diagnostic Laboratory.

West Nile virus is spread to humans through the bite

of an infected mosquito. Most infected people will show little or no signs of disease.

The incubation period is usually two to 14 days. Rarely, infected individuals may develop neuroinvasive disease (infection of the brain or spinal cord) that can be severe or may cause death. This is especially of concern to people 50 and older, people with immune-compromising conditions and people with diabetes or high blood pressure.

About 1 in 5 people who are infected develop a fever with other symptoms, such as headache, body aches, joint pains, vomiting, diarrhea or rash. Most people with febrile illness due to West Nile virus recover completely, but fatigue and weakness can last for weeks or months. It is important that you contact your health care provider if you experience any of these symptoms.

While risk of West Nile disease is low, a handful of people get it each year in Oregon. The virus also affects wildlife and domesticated and farm animals.

Pendleton man faces assault, robbery charges

By JEREMY BURNHAM
Walla Walla Union-Bulletin

WALLA WALLA — What began as an armed group planning to take back a vehicle allegedly stolen from a Pendleton man ended with three locals injured and at least one arrest in Walla Walla.

Charles Thompkins Jr., 63, of Pendleton, was arrested Sunday, Aug. 8, and is accused of organizing 10 other people on July 5 to take a vehicle he claims was stolen from him, Walla Walla County Superior Court documents show.

Thompkins is charged with first-degree robbery, three counts of first-degree assault, first degree burglary, criminal mischief and harassment.

Three people at the Walla Walla house where the vehicle was injured in a confrontation that involved several firearms, police said.

According to the arrest report, Thompkins told the group, including three of his sons, to go with him to a house in Walla Walla and try to take a white Chevrolet Tahoe. Thompkins "directed the rest of the group to beat up the people who had the Tahoe," the report stated.

The arrest report said the group "armed themselves with multiple firearms" and drove to a house in Walla Walla in three cars.

While Thompkins claims to own the Tahoe, the arrest report stated he has not provided any evidence of ownership.

Security footage at the residence shows nine people got out of vehicles while two stayed in a vehicle, the report said. Two men carried what appeared to be "long guns," while two others, including Thompkins, had handguns, the report states.

When the three men

inside the home heard the Tahoe start, one went outside to investigate. He said he heard guns "clacking" and someone telling him not to move or they would shoot.

The report said the man then retreated inside, after which he heard a gunshot. When the Pendleton group gave the three men two minutes to come out, one of the Walla Walla men called 911.

The police report stated the Pendleton group entered the building and a fight ensued. When Walla Walla County Sheriff's Office deputies arrived, they detained the Pendleton residents.

The three alleged victims opted to take their own vehicles to Providence St. Mary Medical Center. According to the report, one left before being treated.

The second victim was treated for a fractured jaw and nasal bone, a laceration of his lip and other cuts and bruising on his face.

The third victim was flown to Kadlec Regional Medical Center in Richland, Washington, where he underwent surgery for a broken eye socket, a fractured finger, a fractured skull and other injuries.

The 10 other members of the group who drove from Pendleton also were named in the arrest report, but the Walla Walla County Prosecuting Attorney's Office has not confirmed what, if any, charges they face.

Thompkins is in the Walla Walla County Jail on \$150,000 bond.

IN BRIEF

Umatilla County has another COVID-19 death, 121 new cases

PENDLETON — The Oregon Health Authority on Wednesday, Aug. 11, reported another COVID-19 death in Umatilla County.

Oregon's 2,920th COVID-19 death is a 39-year-old man from Umatilla County who tested positive July 20 and died on Aug. 8 at Providence St. Mary Medical Center, Walla Walla, according to the OHA.

This edges the county near the triple-digit mark for pandemic-related deaths. The county on Aug. 6 reported the 95th COVID-19 death.

The county health department recently reported several COVID-19 victims who died months ago, all of whom died in Washington. That's because Washington has different reporting requirements than Oregon, health officials say, which suggests the county's death toll could be higher than previously disclosed.

OHA reported 121 new cases in Umatilla County, pushing the coun-

ty's total number of COVID-19 cases past 10,200. More than one in eight people have had COVID-19 in Umatilla County, the data shows.

The county continues to report some of the highest case rates in Oregon and is reporting more daily cases on average than at any other point in the pandemic. The surge, health officials say, is being driven by the delta variant spreading rapidly among unvaccinated people. Last week, the county reported 416 new cases — the second straight week with more than 400 cases.

—EO Media Group

Weston students attend Envision STEM camps

By JEREMY BURNHAM
Walla Walla Union-Bulletin

WESTON — While some students see summer break as a chance to step away from school and enjoy time off, a few Weston Middle School students decided to spend six days of their summer learning in the sciences at an Envision Explore STEM summer camp.

Sixth grader Nathaniel Cox, sixth grader Branson Rabb and eighth grader Mason Matye participated in a Denver, Colorado, camp, while sixth grader Alethea Bond participated in a San Jose, California, camp.

The Explore STEM camp is one in Envision's series of National Youth Leadership Forum camps. Envision camps focus on career exploration and are aimed at exposing students to potential career paths.

Admission is competitive, but students can skip the application process if they are nominated into the program, normally by a teacher.

The four local students were nominated by Weston Middle School sixth grade teacher Amber Doremus, who was invited to become an Envision nominator several years ago.

"For years, I have been nominating students," Doremus said. "Even if a student can't go, I think it's great for them to be nominated and feel a little more confident that, 'Hey, I can really do these things.'"

Doremus said often the students she nominates don't end up going. So, she was excited the four went this time.



Envision/Contributed Photo

Weston Middle School sixth grader Branson Rabb participates in an Envision summer camp in Denver, Colorado, in July 2021.

"It's a wide variety of things they learn about," Doremus said. "It's great opportunity for them. Big-time federal outfits are there."

Branson Rabb said the Denver camp was a great experience. He said he participated in projects in robotics, engineering, forensics and medical.

So, what was his favorite? "Probably robotics and engineering," he said. "It was really fun coding the robot and actually designing it."

Branson said the experience made him excited about a possible career path.

"It kind of gave me an idea of what I want to be," he said. "I want to do something with building robots or designing them."

Mason Matye also found the experience worthwhile.

"Engineering is pretty cool," he said. "We designed 3D buildings for suitable life on Mars."

Mason said it was a fun way to spend part of his summer.

"I got to meet new people," he said. "If you're into learning about this kind of stuff, then it's really fun."

Alethea said she enjoyed the medical portion. She already knows she wants to be a surgeon when she grows up.

"I was already interested in (becoming a surgeon) before the camp, but it made me want to do it even more," she said.

Alethea's mother, Rebecca Bond, said she's grateful her daughter was able to take part in the camp.

"She made some great friends, had wonderful leaders and really grew in her confidence," Bond said.

"We're so grateful for Ms. Doremus having nominated her and all the Weston Middle School staff encouragement she received. We would have never known of this opportunity otherwise."

She said she hopes other families can learn about the camp and send their children.

"I have been talking to other parents locally," Bond said. "Here in our part of Oregon, we really don't get to hear about programs like this. If her teacher had not said something, we would not have known. It opened a world of possibilities to us."

Doremus said she chose to nominate the students she did because she felt they'd be successful at the camp and get a lot out of it.

"There's a lot of factors," she said. "Work ethic, general knowledge in several areas. It's not just, 'Oh, this student is good at math.' ... You just kind of get a feeling about who could benefit from something like this."

She said she hopes the four students come back feeling confident in their abilities.

Memorial Service for
MARY WALLAN
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Athena Baptist Church.

Memorial donations may be made to the Mary Wallan nursing scholarship through St. Anthony's Hospital Foundation

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