

# Lifeways employees to join CCS

Lifeways to retain at least three of its facilities in Umatilla County

By **BRYCE DOLE**  
East Oregonian

PENDLETON — At least 60 former Lifeways employees are joining Community Counseling Solutions when the county's new mental health and substance abuse provider begins its contract this fall.

The new staff will be working for the Heppner-based provider by Dec. 1, when CCS' contract with Umatilla County begins, according to Community Counseling Executive Director Kimberly Lindsay. Several other employees are on the fence but may end up working

for CCS, Lindsay said, adding that the employees transferring over worked in outpatient behavioral health services.

That's more than half the employees Lifeways has said would be laid off this fall, according to a Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notification — or WARN — sent to the county board of commissioners and the Oregon Employment Department's Dislocated Worker Unit on Aug. 13.

The WARN notice stated layoffs "may come in stages" between Oct. 13 and Nov. 30, adding "layoffs may be earlier or later in that time frame, again depending on the transition to the new provider."

Lindsay said it's unclear whether this means employees could be without work prior to joining CCS on Dec. 1. She said Life-

ways officials previously told her employees in the county wouldn't be laid off until Nov. 30.

"If I were an employee of Lifeways, and I knew I was going to be picked up by CCS Dec. 1, and I read that, I would wonder if I was going to be laid off work for six weeks or seven weeks," she said.

When asked about the gap, Lifeways Chief Executive Officer Tim Hoekstra said in an email the provider planned to send the WARN notice in July, but "at that time CCS had not had substantive conversations with Lifeways employees in Umatilla County for the purpose of providing an intent for employment."

He then added Lifeways sent the notice in mid-August "as we still did not have a comfortable level of confirmation that CCS had

committed to a sufficient number of employees."

"We are very pleased that CCS has responded positively to our recommendations to shore up staff through those letters of employment intent and accompany us at our facilities to conduct meet and greets," he said.

The Ontario-based provider, officials have said, employed more than 120 people in the county, most of whom are county residents.

Hoekstra said Lifeways plans to retain some of its facilities, including Aspen Springs in Hermiston, McNary Place in Hermiston, and Westgate House in Pendleton.

"Lifeways continues to be invested in the well-being of the whole of Umatilla County," he said.

As for Lifeways' eight other facilities in Umatilla County, Lind-

say said CCS will acquire some of them and will possibly lease some facilities owned by Lifeways.

However, Hoekstra said: "There are no specific plans for any of those buildings as of yet."

Among those facilities is the old St. Anthony Medical Office Building in Pendleton and some of the surrounding land near 1601 S.E. Court Ave. Lifeways acquired that property in October 2019 for \$1 million, according to news reports.

Lifeways, which served the county for more than 16 years, lost its contract in May when the county went out for a request for a proposal, seeking a new provider that would cover both mental health and substance abuse services. The county awarded that contract to CCS in late-May.



Jedidiah Maynes/Walla Walla Union-Bulletin

A crash involving at least two vehicles stops traffic on Highway 11 north of Milton-Freewater Thursday, Aug. 12, 2021.

## Details emerge on violent Highway 11 collision

By **JEDIDIAH MAYNES**  
Walla Walla Union-Bulletin

MILTON-FREEWATER — Details have been released on a brutal head-on collision that involved two children last week on Highway 11 north of Milton-Freewater.

According to Oregon State Police, all four people in the crash were transported to hospitals in the crash that shut down the busy highway for about four hours Aug. 12.

OSP Sgt. Jeremy Gunter investigated the crash. He said the first 911 call came in at 12:09 p.m.

Gunter said the preliminary investigation determined a 2001 blue Honda Accord driven by Antonio Garcia, 42, of Milton-Freewater, crossed from the southbound lanes into the northbound lanes near the highway's intersection with East and West Crockett roads.

Gunter said there is no official cause of the crash, but "preliminary indications are a medical issue could have been a contribut-

ing factor" for Garcia's swerve into oncoming traffic.

Garcia's car entered the path of a 2013 maroon Ford Taurus driven by Maria Guadalupe Lara Lara, 29, of Milton-Freewater. There were two children in her car — a 3-year-old child and a 1-month-old baby.

Garcia suffered "severe injuries," Gunter said, and was taken to Providence St. Mary Medical Center in Walla Walla before being flown to Providence Sacred Heart Medical Center, Spokane. A message was left with hospital representatives for Garcia's condition.

Lara Lara and the two children in her car suffered unspecified injuries and were taken to St. Mary Medical Center. The hospital is not releasing conditions of patients at this time.

Gunter said OSP officers were assisted by the Milton-Freewater Police Department, Milton-Freewater Rural Fire Department, Umatilla County Sheriff's Office and the Oregon Department of Transportation.

### IN BRIEF

#### County reports seven COVID-19 deaths this week

PENDLETON — Umatilla County reported seven COVID-19 deaths this week, setting the county's pandemic record for deaths reported in a single week.

In addition, the county identified three COVID-19 deaths previously reported by other counties that were Umatilla County residents. That raises the county's overall death toll to 106 since the pandemic started.

The county's 104th reported victim is an 80-year-old woman who tested positive Aug. 4 and died Aug. 13 at CHI St. Anthony Hospital, Pendleton. She had unspecified underlying health conditions, the county reported Aug. 19.

The 105th victim is a 47-year-old man who tested positive July 14 and died Aug. 14 at Adventist Health, Portland. He, too, had unspecified underlying health conditions.

The 106th victim is an 80-year-old man who tested positive Aug. 3 and died Aug. 5 at Oregon Health & Science University, Portland. As of Aug. 20, the county had yet to determine whether he had underlying health conditions.

The disclosures comes as the county reports 104 new COVID-19 cases on Aug. 20. Cases are so far lower this week compared to previous weeks, which set various pandemic records for cases counts

and infections rates as hospitals filled due to the delta variant tearing through Oregon.

But at 341 reported cases so far this week, daily counts remain higher than previous pandemic surges, and far higher than rates seen just more than a month ago.

In all, 10,987 COVID-19 cases have been reported in Umatilla County. Nearly one out of every seven county residents have contracted the virus since the pandemic started in March 2020.

#### Port of Morrow announces SAGE Center expansion

BOARDMAN — Less than a decade into its existence, the SAGE Center is getting an expansion.

In a Thursday, Aug. 19, press release, the Port of Morrow announced it was starting development on the 12,500-square-foot Cultural Alliance and Training Center at SAGE as an expansion to the existing museum. The expansion is focused on providing venue space.

The project is being funded from a \$4.3 million appropriation from the Oregon Legislature passed during the 2021 session. The SAGE Center opened in 2013 and is an interactive museum dedicated to the local agriculture and energy industries.

—EO Media Group

## Hermiston council votes on bridge analysis

East Oregonian

HERMISTON — The Hermiston City Council at its meeting Monday, Aug. 23, votes to consider helping fund an engineering analysis to evaluate the pros and cons of two potential Umatilla River bridges west of Hermiston, according to a press release from the city.

The council meeting starts at 7 p.m. at the Hermiston Community Center, 415 S. Highway 395, Hermiston.

The city of Hermiston in 2001 identified the two optimal road extensions and bridge locations: Elm Avenue and Punkin Center Road. A preliminary engineering report will identify which location best fits the transportation, economic

and environmental needs of the region.

The city council will vote on whether to sign a memorandum of understanding with Umatilla County and the city of Umatilla to fund the study. All three entities have been engaged in the process because the bridge will benefit development and transportation for the entire region, according to the press release.

The West Highland Avenue bridge at Riverfront Park is the only Umatilla River crossing in Hermiston, leading to increasingly concentrated traffic on Highland, Southwest 11th Street and the Westland/Bridge/Powerline corridor.

"As our area's population and workforce grows, vehicle traffic will increase with it,"

said Mark Morgan, assistant city manager. "Planning now for additional future connections will lay the groundwork for continued positive residential, commercial, and industrial growth across the region."

The preliminary engineering report will provide cost estimates and conceptual designs for both crossings, with the hope of identifying a preferred option. The next step will be to locate state and/or federal funding for the construction of the bridge within the next 10-20 years.

The meeting will be livestreamed on the city's website at [www.hermiston.or.us](http://www.hermiston.or.us), which also has links to the city council meeting agenda and more.

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