

EAST OREGONIAN

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 7, 2021

145th Year, No. 138

WINNER OF THE 2020 ONPA GENERAL EXCELLENCE AWARD

\$1.50



Bartender Randy Erwin mixes a drink on Wednesday, Sept. 1, 2021, at the Hamley Steak House saloon. The eatery, owned by the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, received a \$1.2 million grant from the Oregon Restaurant Revitalization Fund.

Kathy Aney/East Oregonian

‘As friends we part’

National Guardsman from Pendleton helped Afghan ally escape to United States

By **BRYCE DOLE**
East Oregonian

PENDLETON — Sgt. Maj. Joshua Paullus speaks to his old friend Hussein once or twice a week. The longtime Pendleton resident listens to the 32-year-old Afghan relate his family’s plight in Kabul, Afghanistan, the high-desert metropolis where the two met at a military base seven years ago.

For weeks, half of Hussein’s family has been stuck at home, watching the Taliban patrol the streets day and night in trucks and armored military vehicles, perhaps searching for Afghans like them who worked for the United States during the 20-year war.

The other half, including his mother and father, were stuck at the airport alongside thousands of Afghans, awaiting their escape until nearby explosions killed and wounded scores of Afghan civilians and American service members on Thursday, Aug. 26. Hussein’s family fled back to their home.

“They don’t sleep,” Hussein said of his family.

Out of concern for his family’s safety, Hussein asked the East Oregonian not to publish his last name.

“When I get note from the embassy, I will tell them, ‘Go to the airport.’ I tell them, don’t take any bags and wear your hijab,” he said. “I will tell them to burn everything. If (the Taliban) finds any military document, they will shoot them.”

Hussein worked for the U.S. Armed Forces for 15 years, first as a linguist and then as a contractor. By 2015, as Paullus was nearing the end of his eight-month deployment, the two had discussed that Hussein’s life would be in danger as the U.S. evacuated. He was receiving threats against his life. He knew his time was almost up. Paullus wanted to help.

A 30-year member of the Oregon Army National Guard, Paullus wrote a letter sponsoring Hussein as he immigrated to the U.S. with his family. He liked Hussein and vouched for his character, work ethic and financial stability. With Paullus’ help, Hussein received approval from the federal government in 2019 to move to America with his wife and three daughters. Now he lives in San Diego County, selling jewelry to get by.

“He felt that, when the U.S. does leave, he and his family would potentially be in harm’s way,” said Paullus, 47, a parole and probation officer for Umatilla County Community Corrections. “But as long as he was there, he wanted to see that good things were done, and he did his part to do as much as he could for his country. At the end of the day, if he wasn’t able to get his U.S. citizenship, he would have dealt with it as many of his friends currently are.”

Running in circles

In recent weeks, Hussein has been glued to his phone. From nearly 7,800 miles away, he has watched the Taliban seize the city where he grew up. He seldom goes to work, despite his expensive rent.

See Friends, Page A9

BUSINESS EXPENSES

Pandemic still not over for local restaurants

By **ANTONIO SIERRA AND NICK ROSENBERGER**
East Oregonian

PENDLETON — Many local restaurants may have survived the heaviest COVID-19 restrictions with the help of millions of federal stimulus, but they’re not out of the woods yet.

According to a database compiled by The Oregonian, the U.S. Small Business Administration granted more than a half billion dollars to more than 2,300 Oregon restaurants, bars and other businesses that prepare food and drink as a part of the Restaurant Revitalization Fund, a federal stimulus program specifically targeted to aid restaurants affected by the pandemic.

Umatilla County restaurants took home more than \$4.3 million, led by a \$1.2 million for Hamley’s, which operates a steakhouse and cafe. Hamley’s was purchased by the Wildhorse Resort & Casino in 2019, and as a tribally-owned business, it didn’t qualify for many of the grants and loans previously offered by other governmental entities, Wildhorse Controller Michell Wellington said in an interview. But Hamley’s finances were in order when the Restaurant Revitalization Fund opened, allowing the local operation to secure a large grant.

Wellington and Hamley’s



Patrons eat and drink at the Hamley Steak House saloon on Wednesday, Sept. 1, 2021. The eating establishment, owned by the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, received a \$1.2 million grant from the Oregon Restaurant Revitalization Fund.

Kathy Aney/East Oregonian

General Manager Jan MacGregor said the business has endured cycles of closures, take-out only periods and capacity limits, following state guidelines each time they changed. At times, they elected to close the steakhouse completely rather than takeout because it was the more affordable option.

“As a steakhouse (offering) fine dining, people didn’t want a piece of prime rib and take it home,” MacGregor said.

When the steakhouse did

reopen in February, it operated at a loss due to higher labor and food costs. Wellington said Hamley’s has been operating at closer to breakeven in recent months, but large events still have been slow to come back in 2021, hurting business. The federal grant will cover some of the steakhouse and cafe’s losses, but with Hamley’s having a smaller staff than it did pre-pandemic, MacGregor said this year’s Round-Up service will be different.

“We will not be able to accommodate as many people as we have in the past because of staffing, but the people that we do accommodate will have a wonderful time,” she said.

Desert Lanes Family Fun Center, also a recipient of Oregon’s Restaurant Revitalization Fund, received the highest amount out of any business in Hermiston with a total of \$426,500.

See Restaurants, Page A9

Honoring local veterans with music



Kathy Aney/East Oregonian

Steven Kidwell sings during a concert to honor veterans on Saturday, Sept. 4, 2021, at the Heritage Station Museum, Pendleton.

Musicians perform to give back to those who served

By **NICK ROSENBERGER**
East Oregonian

PENDLETON — Classic blues echoed Saturday, Sept. 4, from the Heritage Station Museum in Pendleton as musicians, veterans and community members gathered together to support wounded veterans.

Country and southern rock musician Steven Kidwell organized the inaugural Veterans Benefit and Music

Festival. The event found veterans from nearly every generation attending, ranging from those who served in the Korean and Vietnam wars to Iraq and Afghanistan.

All proceeds from the event went to the Gary Sinise Foundation to help support veterans, first responders and their families with an emphasis on the wounded.

“This is something that’s near and dear to my heart,” said Kidwell, who is a veteran of the Iraq War and whose father served in Korea. “It’s a way of giving back for people that have given so much.”

Kidwell’s passion for veterans showed through the

constant work and effort he sunk into the event, working seven days a week for the last month-and-a-half to spread the word among veterans and supporters. He had been doing benefits for veteran suicide prevention and the Wounded Warrior Project for years, but this was the first time doing something on this scale, said Kidwell’s wife, Carolyn Rovier.

Jaye Cammann, Kidwell’s manager, was excited going into the event, saying this was the most patriotic way they could give back to those who had served.

See Music, Page A9



7 2946710002 2