



Head Cook Carlos Salvatirra grills burgers Sept. 25, 2021, at The Bridge Bistro & Brews in Umatilla. Ben Lonergan/East Oregonian

The Bridge shifts gears

Owners ‘hellbent’ to make change from The Riverside permanent

By ERICK PETERSON
East Oregonian

UMATILLA — From the outside, The Bridge Bistro & Brews may look like the old Riverside Sports Bar, but it is much different on the inside, and the owners could not be happier about it.

“Things are good,” said Paulette Dufloth. She owns the Bridge with her husband Daren Dufloth. They owned The Riverside as well, inheriting it from Daren’s father.

She called the transition, which began in May 2020, “wonderful.” She also said the community has been very supportive.

The Riverside opened in 1994, and it was a business that supported her family in a town the Dufloths love. It also employed several people, so they do not express any regrets about it. However, they had long wanted to convert the sports bar and strip club to a family-friendly restaurant.

On March 15, 2020, they ended The Riverside due to COVID-19 concerns. They stood in the middle of their business and wondered what they would do.

“We had some hard decisions to make,” Paulette said. They went from making



Paige Esterbloom fills beverages Sept. 25, 2021, at The Bridge Bistro & Brews in Umatilla. Ben Lonergan/East Oregonian

an income to making nothing, and they felt stressed.

Two days after closing, they started renovating without a decision about the business and whether they would make the transition.

Paulette was feeling burnt out by the business. It was never her cup of tea, she said. And while they did not make a statement right away about changing it permanently, she said she was “hellbent” on a big change and she would not go back. The adult business would be no more, forever.

The industry, Paulette said, lends itself to a “different customer base” which is “less respectful” and “harder to control.”

As she and Daren are both over 50, they see themselves in a “retirement phase” in which they do not want to deal with a difficult clientele.

“It was becoming hard, mentally, for me to walk in the door at the end of the day,” she said. “I worked really, really hard over these 23 years.

It’s aged me, and I feel my husband and I have sacrificed a lot in the time frame we’ve been here,” Paulette said.

In a few years, she may even sell The Bridge. For now, though, she said she wants to build it further and “make it the best it can be.”

She said she has recently had new opportunities that made this transition possible. With COVID-19, grants and loans have been made available to the business. They would not have been able to remodel without the assistance, she said.

Now, with the income from the kitchen rather than mostly from the bar, Paulette said the business is as profitable as it had been prior to the pandemic. She is having difficulty finding employees, but she is looking and said she feels she will eventually find the right people.

There are funny moments with this change, however, she said. Sometimes, people call The Bridge to ask whether it



A set of pulled pork sliders sit on the kitchen window Sept. 25, 2021, before being delivered to a customer at The Bridge Bistro & Brews in Umatilla. Ben Lonergan/East Oregonian

is open and whether dancers are performing.

Yes, they are open, she says. No, there are no dancers.

Another humorous thing, Daren said, is when he hears the sound of babies, which is a strange thing to hear inside those walls.

Pivoting to something more “palatable to the community,” he said, has involved a “mind shift.” Little things, such as buying high chairs for infants to getting larger tables to accommodate families, had to be done. They also had to change advertising and reorientate the kitchen. Portion control and kitchen cost analysis, which were afterthoughts, had to be learned.

Still, Daren Dufloth said he’s glad for it and so, too, seem to be the public.

Drop-in peer centers opening to help with addiction

By ERICK PETERSON
East Oregonian

UMATILLA COUNTY — Locals struggling with substance use are getting new places to seek some help.

The Oregon Washington Health Network is opening three drop-in peer centers next week, one in Pendleton, one in Hermiston and one in Milton-Freewater. The centers will offer “low-barrier access for individuals and families that are struggling with substance use,” said Amy Ashton-Williams, the network’s executive director. “Our purpose is to offer some support and guidance.”

Ashton-Williams said the “peer movement has really exploded” in recent years, and it has given people with “lived experience” a chance to help other people. That is, a “peer,” who has a personal history with recovery and addiction, can help other people. They can share their own stories, relate to others and possibly even chart the

Centers hold open houses Oct. 6 in Hermiston, Pendleton, Milton-Freewater

recoveries of others.

Family members of people in crisis do not always know about available resources or the best next step, she said. Someone in that situation can meet with one of the center’s “peers,” people who are experienced with and understanding of life’s many difficulties.

The peers also are there to help individuals in recovery, seeking to end their use of alcohol or other drugs or to make their addictions safer. The network in such cases, directs people to harm-reduction resources, such as a needle-exchange program.

Professional staff work at each center, Ashton-Williams said. The Hermiston Center has two peer mentors, Pendleton has three peer mentors and Milton-Freewater has two peer mentors and two peer mentor supervisors. They all vary in education, as some have high school diplomas or GEDs, some

have bachelor’s degrees and others are completing their master’s degrees. All staff, Ashton-Williams said, regardless of schooling, are familiar with resources and able to help.

The centers, Ashton-Williams said, are open to clients of different ages. They will even be able to help adolescents. Peers are also available by phone and services are free.

The centers also can help people with English or Spanish-language services, Ashton-Williams said. When individuals walk in, they will be met by someone who looks like them, speaks their language and knows their culture, provided they speak either English or Spanish.

“That was very important,” she said. Spanish language speakers, a large portion of her service areas, have a history of being neglected by programs similar to hers, she said.

She added, these centers will meet a great need. She said she fears increasing overdose rates in Umatilla County. The pandemic, she said, is likely exacerbating problems, isolating people.

The Oregon Washington Health Network will host grand openings Wednesday, Oct. 6, at each of the drop-in peer centers. The times and locations are as follows:

- 9-10 a.m. at the Hermiston Center, 165 S.W. Third St.
- 12-1 p.m. at the Pendleton Center at 200 S.E. Hailey Ave., Suite 105/106.
- 3-4 p.m. at the Milton Center at 410 N. Main St., Milton-Freewater.

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Officials confirm wolves attacked, injured cattle

By GEORGE PLAVEN
Capital Press

UKIAH — The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife confirmed wolves recently attacked eight cattle in the Ukiah Valley south of Pendleton, though it remains unclear which pack is responsible.

The first report came on Sept. 25, when a ranch hand discovered one dead and six injured calves in an approximately 200-acre private pasture. All were about six months old, weighing between 450 and 550 pounds. Two of the injured calves later were euthanized.

Three days later, another calf was found dead in the same pasture. In each case, the animals had bite marks suggesting they were alive when a predator attacked them. The injuries included tooth scrapes, punctures and tears that were consistent with wolves.

While ODFW has chalked up the depredations to wolves, the agency does not know which pack caused the injuries.

The Ukiah pack, which roams parts of southern Umatilla and Union counties, was not in the area, according to GPS collar data. ODFW is now monitoring the Fivemile pack west of Ukiah to see if it is in areas outside its known territory.

In addition, the agency says a new group of wolves may be present southeast of the depredation location.

Rodger Huffman, a Union County rancher and co-chairman of the Oregon Cattlemen’s Association wolf committee, said both the organization and the producer are asking Fish and Wildlife to kill members of the offending pack to deter further wolf-livestock conflicts in the area.

Under the state’s Wolf Conservation and Management Plan, wolves in Eastern Oregon may be subject to lethal control if they have two confirmed depredations within nine months.

Twice this year, ODFW authorized a permit to kill wolves from the Lookout Mountain pack in Baker County following repeated



Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife/Contributed Photo
Wolves recently attacked eight cattle in the Ukiah Valley of Northeastern Oregon. Wildlife managers are attempting to determine which pack the wolves were from.

attacks on livestock. The agency shot two wolf pups from the Lookout Mountain pack in August, and then three more wolves — including the alpha male — in September after depredations did not stop.

Still, Huffman said ranchers have remained frustrated with the state’s management of wolves. He said the number of depredations confirmed by the agency is lower than the actual number producers face.

“We have a wolf management and conservation plan, and conservation has clearly been the first and highest priority,” Huffman said. “We’re just asking very respectfully that at least management be 50% of the equation in this.”

Environmental groups, on the other hand, staunchly oppose killing wolves and continue to fight to overturn the federal government’s decision to take wolves off the list of endangered species.

On Sept. 15, the Biden administration announced it would review the status of gray wolves in the northern Rocky Mountains, which could potentially restore endangered species protections in Idaho, Montana, Wyoming and the eastern one-third of Oregon and Washington.

Oregon’s minimum known wolf population is 173 as of the most recent count at the end of 2020.

IN BRIEF

M-F man killed in Highway 11 crash

MILTON-FREEWATER — A Milton-Freewater man died Thursday morning, Sept. 30, when the car he was driving struck an oncoming vehicle.

The deadly wreck occurred at approximately 6:20 a.m. on Highway 11 near Milepost 35. Victor Santana-Torres, 23, was driving north on the highway in a Cadillac Deville when it drifted into the oncoming lane and struck a transit van. State police reported he succumbed to injuries.

Bradley Varvell, 55, of Walla Walla, was driving the

van. He suffered serious injuries, and an ambulance took him to Providence St. Mary Medical Center in Walla Walla. OSP did not have information about his condition.

Personnel from the Milton-Freewater Police Department, Milton-Freewater Rural Fire Department and Oregon Department of Transportation also responded to the crash.

The crash led to closing the southbound side on Highway 11 for approximately four hours. Oregon State Police also reported it is investigating driver fatigue as a contributing factor in the crash.

— EO Media Group

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