

# EAST OREGONIAN

OCTOBER 16-17, 2021

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INSIDE

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\$1.50

REMEMBERING RON MARTIN

## 'THIS WAS HIS COMMUNITY. THESE WERE HIS NEIGHBORS.'

By BRYCE DOLE  
East Oregonian

PENDLETON — More than 100 people gathered Wednesday, Oct. 13, in the Pendleton Convention Center in commemoration of Ron Martin, longtime owner of the Pendleton Pioneer Chapel, Folsom-Bishop funeral home, who died Oct. 4. He was 69.

Mourners remembered Martin as someone who always went above and beyond to help friends, family and people who he didn't even know.



Martin

Martin was a member of Rotary, the Elks and Eagles lodges, an active volunteer at programs and events and supporter of the Veterans of Foreign Wars. He won many awards for his service in Pendleton, including a Pendleton First Citizens award in 2018.

"He was always there," said Pastor Chris Clemons, of the Pendleton Church of the Nazarene. "He was always involved. And he was involved because he wanted to be."

Martin's casket sat at the front of the center's main corridor. The high-ceilinged room was decorated with orange, red, yellow and white flowers. His guitar sat propped in front of the casket. A painting of horses looking toward green fields among mountains in the sunlight hung above the place where Martin's closest friends and family shared their memories.

Wally Ordeman, executive director of the Oregon Funeral Directors Association, said Martin was somebody who understood the death care industry better than almost anyone else; Martin expertly guided clients through pain and grief. Several people who attended the service said Martin was someone who showed up to comfort grieving community members in the late hours of the evening.

See Martin, Page A11



Kathy Aney/East Oregonian

Funeral director Kevin Loveland pauses a moment while speaking about Ron Martin at Martin's funeral Wednesday, Oct. 13, 2021, at the Pendleton Convention Center.

## County's contractor tracking to provide full services by Dec. 1

By BRYCE DOLE  
East Oregonian

PENDLETON — Umatilla County's new mental health and substance abuse provider is more than halfway up-and-running.

Kimberly Lindsay, the executive director for Community Counseling Solutions said in an interview the Heppner-based nonprofit began its substance abuse services for the county Sept. 1 and is on track to begin mental health services Dec. 1.

"There's not any one thing that hasn't happened or is in the works," Lindsay said.

Sixteen employees of the county's former alcohol and drug program now have started working at CCS, Lindsay said. And of the 95 positions that make up the provider's mental health services, there are 19 vacancies that will either need to be filled or are in the process of being filled.

"It's not great, because it's hard to fill these positions," Lindsay said. "Across the universe, it seems like there's not enough employees. But the number of opportunities for people in Umatilla County has increased because we're doing more of our work local."

That means only two of Lifeways' former Umatilla County employees have not transitioned, county officials say.

Lifeways, a mental health provider that served the county for more than 16 years, lost its contract with the county in May when the county chose Community Counseling Solutions to be the first contractor, combining mental health and substance abuse services under one umbrella.

Lindsay said a few of the vacant positions are ones CCS created, including a "law enforcement liaison" that will serve as a bridge between local police and the provider's mental health professionals.

Several law enforcement officials across the county have previously said they were overburdened with mental health calls due to care facilities closing and services shifting in recent years. Lindsay said she hopes the new position will help repair what she described as a "damaged relationship" between law enforcement agencies and mental health care in the county.

"The quality of care was concerning," she said.

See CCS, Page A11

## 247 COVID-19 cases linked to Round-Up

Cases on decline, but COVID-19 has killed at least 48 county residents since July

By BRYCE DOLE  
East Oregonian

PENDLETON — Coronavirus cases in Umatilla County are on a steady decline, but the number of cases connected to the Pendleton Round-Up continues to increase.

Data from the Umatilla County Public Health Department and Yellowhawk Tribal Health Center on the Umatilla Indian Reservation show at least 247 cases have been linked to the week-long rodeo.

Cases from the event spread across at least seven counties and two states besides Oregon, health officials reported. But the vast majority of cases — 225 — were among Umatilla County residents, Umatilla County Public Health Director Joe Fiumara said.

Still, after a brief but significant spike in cases following an outbreak tied to the Round-Up, the county, like much of Oregon, has seen cases drop day by day for nearly two weeks, according to data from the Oregon Health Authority.

Umatilla County reported just 27 cases on Friday, Oct. 15, the lowest daily total since mid-July, and county has been averaging

roughly 50 new confirmed and presumptive COVID-19 cases daily, according to OHA data. That's the lowest average in three weeks. It remains possible Umatilla County could have its lowest case count in nearly three months, according to state data and Fiumara.

"Something would have to drastically change for us not to report a pretty good decline in cases," Fiumara said. "It's kind of the best case scenario for us coming off the spike from the Round-Up."

The county is fortunate the spike did not continue for any longer than it did, Fiumara noted, even though at least one regional

hospital has reported a sharp spike in patients hospitalized with the virus since the outbreak.

"We were really hopeful that, if people stayed home and didn't spread these cases around, that we would see a quick drop," Fiumara said. "And it looks like we're seeing that, which is very good."

For nearly three consecutive months, the county saw at least 350 cases each week as hospitals were slammed with patients. Since May 1, 90% of patients hospitalized with COVID-19 in Umatilla County have been unvaccinated, according to data from the county health department.

See Cases, Page A11

## Sams makes good on early promise

By ANTONIO SIERRA  
East Oregonian

Kathy Aney/East Oregonian, File

Chuck Sams, then the communications director for the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, gives local high school students some insight on tribal history and beliefs in 2018. Sams now is President Joe Biden's nominee to direct the National Park Service. His confirmation hearing is Tuesday, Oct. 19, 2021.

MISSION — In an announcement setting a date for the confirmation hearing for President Joe Biden's nominee for National Park Service director, the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources referred to him as Charles F. Sams III.

But to the people he's worked with over several decades in Oregon and on the Umatilla Indian Reservation, he's just Chuck.

On Tuesday, Oct. 19, Sams will begin his public quest to convince at least 50 senators to confirm him to the U.S. Department of Interior position. If the Senate obliges, Sams will become the first American Indian to hold the job in the service's 105-year history.

While Sams, an enrolled member of the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, built his local reputation as a leader in tribal government, he will be managing an agency that operates on a much larger scale. The CTUIR encompasses three tribes, a 172,000-acre reservation, more than 3,000 members and as recently as 2018 employed nearly 1,800 people. In comparison, a 20,000-person workforce staffs the park service, which spans 423 locations and 85 million acres.

But to those who grew up and worked with Sams on the reservation, his appointment to a top position in a presidential administration came as no surprise.

See Sams, Page A11



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