

# Hansell honored for community college support

East Oregonian

SALEM — State Sen. Bill Hansell is being honored for his support for community colleges.

The Oregon Community College Association announced Tuesday Dec. 7, it was giving the Athena Republican one of its Howard



Hansell

Cherry Awards, a prize awarded to advocates, administrators and board members who contribute toward community colleges.

In a press release, the association highlighted Hansell's support for community college funding, his regular attendance at "Workforce Wednesday" events last February and his work in 2020 and 2021 to preserve community college education in Oregon's prisons.

"He is known for bringing his

colleagues from around the state to Eastern Oregon and driving to other legislative districts in his pickup truck to encourage working across party lines to collaborate and better serve Oregonians," the press release states. "While Blue Mountain Community College is in his home district, Sen. Hansell is a strong, passionate and supportive voice for all community colleges across the state."

In his own press release, Hansell

thanked the association for its recognition.

"Oregon's community colleges are vital to our communities, from career and technical education to support our local economies," he said in a statement. "I will always be a strong supporter of our community colleges, and I am thankful for the work that OCCA does to ensure legislators like me are aware of the challenges they face. Without them, we couldn't

make the educated decisions we do."

Hansell and three other honorees will receive their awards at the association's annual conference in Sunriver on April 14. At the conference, the association also will present the Cam Preus Award for Extraordinary Commitment to Community Colleges, an award named after a former BMCC president, who now is the association's executive director.

# Pendleton's BackFire Station looks for more money from commission

By ANTONIO SIERRA  
East Oregonian

PENDLETON — The members of the Pendleton City Council handpicked the owners of the business that became BackFire Station and then granted them nearly a half-million dollars to help turn the old Fire Station No. 1 into a restaurant and motorcycle shop. Now those owners are returning to council chambers to ask for more money to complete the project.

The council will hold a special meeting Tuesday, Dec. 14, as the Pendleton Development Commission to consider more funding for BackFire Station. As of Dec. 10, details in the agenda were light. How much the owners were asking for or the specifics of what they would be spending the money on weren't included.

The meeting Dec. 14 will mark the latest chapter in a relationship that goes back to April 2020.

When the fire department moved to a new headquarters in 2019, the city of Pendleton was left with an empty property at 911 S.W. Court Ave., just a block away from the Round-Up Grounds. The council balked at simply selling the property to the highest bidder and instead created a proposal submission process to determine the best use for the property as it transferred into private hands.

The city received two proposals. One was from La Grande developer Gust Tsiasos would turn the property into a boutique hotel, while the other was from Moto Stuff, a Hillsboro motorcycle parts company owned by Scott Hart and Erin Bennett.

The couple was looking to expand their business to include a more front-facing component, and after the council selected Moto Stuff and sold the property to the busi-



Ben Lonergan/East Oregonian

**Scott Hart, left, and Erin Bennett, owners of BackFire Station, string up Christmas lights Dec. 4, 2021, at the eatery in Pendleton. The Pendleton Development Commission meets Tuesday, Dec. 14, to consider a request to give the business more funding.**

ness for \$350,000, Hart and Bennett returned to the council last November for an urban development grant.

The pitch Hart and Bennett made to the council, acting as the development commission, was to turn the old fire station into a draw for locals and tourists alike. Their plans not only would move some of their Moto Stuff operations to Pendleton but also turn the front of the business into a restaurant, lounge and retail space. The next phase of development would create a rooftop townhome and turn the former firefighter living quarters into "microsuites." The last phase of the project was slated to turn the training tower into a vacation rental and complete the main part

of the building by adding a service shop and a motorcycle rental center.

The commission agreed to grant the \$1.3 million project \$494,819, and since then, Hart and Bennett opened BackFire Station to the public. According to the Dec. 14 agenda, the owners will make a presentation on the status of the renovation before requesting additional funds.

The development meeting will be at 6:30 p.m. at the council chambers in Pendleton City Hall, 500 S.W. Dorion Ave. The commission meeting will be immediately followed by a city council workshop at 7 p.m. Both meetings can also be accessed virtually via Zoom at [bit.ly/3jKiFQy](https://bit.ly/3jKiFQy).

# Nurse steps away from profession to open thrift shop

By ERICK PETERSON  
East Oregonian

BOARDMAN — Boardman resident Shannon Karl said she would see people walking long distances to visit stores. To help solve that problem, she said, she opened Daisy Lily Thrift Boutique. The shop at 117 S.E. Front St., Boardman, opened Dec. 1.

Karl, a former nurse with Columbia River Health, said she felt her greatest sympathy for mothers and their children. They do not have access to cars in many cases, or they have access but only when another family member returns home from work. This leaves them walking as many as 30 miles to Hermiston for a store.

A closer store was necessary, she said, and a secondhand store was ideal because there are poorer people in the area.

Daisy Lily Thrift sells a wide variety of donated items, from toys to clothing, books and more.

She named the store after her daughters' birth flowers, the daisy and the lily.

Makenzie Karl, born in April, has the daisy as a birth flower. Jasmine Karl, born in May, has the lily of the valley as a birth flower. The flower names come together to form Daisy Lily, which their mother used as the name of an earlier business, Daisy Lily Design. She then started making crafts to sell at local events.

Rather than offering her goods elsewhere, she said she will sell her coasters, dresses, picture frames and other goods exclusively at her new store. Karl also said she is ready for Christmas.

This new career as a small business owner is exciting to her, she said. And while she intends to keep her nursing license and possibly look into online nursing work, she said she wants to see if she likes her new work more.

"The medical field is not getting easier," she said.

She added that burnout is high in the profession. After 25 years in the field, she said she feels it is "a lot" and she wants a rest.

Karl said she wants to be a value to the community through the thrift store, which provides a place for local people to donate perfectly good items they otherwise would toss in the garbage and that she can sell at affordable prices.

"That's the main thing," she said. "I want people to have some place near to go that is budget friendly."

## LOCAL BRIEF

### Matilla gets more than nine years in plea deal

PENDLETON — John McKenzie Matilla's return to Eastern Oregon for a retrial in his drunk driving and manslaughter case ended with a plea deal to a serve nine years, two months in state prison.

That's a little less than a year off his original sentence in 2020. Matilla, 26, of Weston, took a

plea deal Wednesday, Dec. 9, the result of a settlement conference, according to state court documents. Matilla pleaded guilty to second-degree manslaughter and driving under the influence of intoxicants, and admitted he was responsible for the death of Adelaida Solis Torres.

Matilla on Feb. 22, 2019, was driving on Highway 11 near Weston when he crashed into Solis Torres, a 26-year veteran

of the Oregon Department of Human Services. Solis Torres died in the crash, and Matilla fled the scene. Police later arrested him.

A jury in March 2020 convicted Matilla after three hours of deliberation, of first- and second-degree manslaughter, DUII and hit-and-run involving a person. But only the verdict on the hit-and-run charge was unanimous. The non-unan-

imous verdicts pushed the case back to the Umatilla County Circuit Court in the wake of the 2020 U.S. Supreme Court ruling banning non-unanimous verdicts.

Matilla was in the Umatilla County Jail, Pendleton, since Sept. 29, awaiting retrial. He now is back in the custody of the Oregon Department of Corrections.

—EO Media Group

# Hermiston High grad named Schwarzman Scholar for Chinese studies

By ERICK PETERSON  
Hermiston Herald

HERMISTON — Former Hermiston resident Salma Anguiano claimed to be in good spirits after being named one of 152 Schwarzman Scholars for 2022.

The Whitman College senior is one of 60 awardees from the United States who will join a one-year fully-funded master's program in global affairs at Tsinghua University in Beijing, China, according to a recent press release from Whitman.

Anguiano, a 2018 Hermiston High School graduate, is a double major in politics and Chinese language, with a concentration in global studies.

"Now that I'm a senior, I've been thinking about what's next after Whitman," Anguiano said Thursday, Dec. 9.

So she she applied to Schwarzman Scholars. The program's website details its

mission statement: "Designed to prepare young leaders to serve as a bridge between China and the rest of the world, Schwarzman Scholars is the most significant program of its kind since the Rhodes Trust was founded in 1902."

The website states students work toward a master's degree at Beijing's Tsinghua University, which is one of China's most prestigious universities.

Anguiano said she departs for Beijing in August, after she completes her studies at Whitman. Her degree in China will be in global affairs.

"I'm really passionate about public policy issues," she said.

She added that her specific interests are in higher education, as well as the workers compensation system in the U.S. and issues related to undocumented and migrant populations. She said she hopes to better understand working conditions globally and advo-



Salma Anguiano/Contributed Photo

**Salma Anguiano (center) poses for a photo outside of a Buddhist temple in Yunnan Province, June 2019. The Hermiston resident is one of the 152 Schwarzman Scholars for 2022 and leaving in August for Beijing, China.**

cate for workers around the world. "I'm excited to be surrounded by global leaders," she said.

Her cohort is made up of 151 scholars from different countries. Communicating with, and taking classes alongside, people with different backgrounds should be

educational, she said.

Anguiano has previous study abroad experience, having studied in Kunming, China, during the summer of her first year at Whitman. Kunming, she explained, is in Yunnan province in southern China. There, she studied conversational

Chinese and cultural anthropology at Yunnan University. Her studies in Yunnan also included a two-week learning tour of rural villages and cities.

This was an eye-opening experience, she said, and she reported being glad for the opportunity to see a country so far away from her hometown.

"I think having that exposure opens up my worldview on a number of different issues and challenge my preconceived notions of China and the East," she said. "If I were president, or very rich, I would set up a program to allow students to get that cultural immersion."

In addition to learning about government, she said she also will study Mandarin Chinese. She said her Chinese language skills are "not terrible but not the best." Total immersion, living in China and speaking a lot of Chinese, should help her language skills a lot, she said.



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