

# EAST OREGONIAN

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WINNER OF 16 ONPA AWARDS IN 2021

\$1.50

## Fire, mudslide force out Pendleton residents

By PHIL WRIGHT AND ANTONIO SIERRA  
*East Oregonian*



Pendleton firefighters on Saturday, Jan. 8, 2022, work to gain access to the roof of the home burning at 809 S.W. Sixth St., Pendleton.

PENDLETON — Firefighters in Pendleton on Saturday afternoon, Jan. 8, wrapped up work at a house fire only to head to a mudslide that damaged two other houses.

There were no reports of injuries in either emergency, both on the town's South Hill, but they displaced families.

The fire occurred at the two story house at 809 S.W. Sixth St. The report about the fire came in at 2:41 p.m., Pendleton Fire Chief Jim Critchley said, and crews were on the scene at 2:45 p.m. Pilot Rock Rural Fire Protection District and Umatilla Tribal Fire Department also responded, and the fire was out

at 3:23 p.m.

The fire appears to have started in a bedroom, he said, and caused approximately \$100,000 in damage to the house, which was a rental home to two families living in separate ends of the structure.

Critchley said the landlord paid for the occupants to stay at a hotel and the cause of the fire is under investigation.

Marissa Winterton lived in the duplex that caught fire. Winterton said the fire originated from the other unit and she didn't know the house was on fire until her neighbor knocked on her door.

Winterton shared the unit with her fiancé and their four children. The eldest three children were out of the house at the time, but Winterton was at home cleaning the house

while her fiancé was putting down their baby for a nap.

Winterton initially didn't understand why her neighbor was knocking so urgently, she said, but after answering the door, it didn't take long for her to realize their home was engulfed. Winterton said her children's rooms were heavily damaged, and although she intends to return to the apartment to try to salvage some of the family's possessions, she anticipated whatever wasn't directly damaged by fire or water will probably be affected by the smoke.

Winterton said her neighbor suspects the cause of the fire might be a faulty outlet, but Winterton wants to follow-up with the Pend-

*See Damage, Page A9*

### COVID-19

## Oregon Capitol to remain open for next session

Committee meetings, public testimony continue in virtual format

By SAM STITES  
*Oregon Public Broadcasting*

SALEM — The Oregon Capitol will remain open to the public when lawmakers convene Feb. 1 for a monthlong session.

In a joint statement Monday, Jan. 10, Senate President Peter Courtney and House Speaker Tina Kotek announced while all legislative committee meetings during the upcoming 2022 session will take place virtually, the public will be allowed in the building.

Kotek and Courtney issued a statement last week expressing concern over the omicron variant of COVID-19 and troubling projections by doctors at Oregon Health & Science University. The two presiding officers of the Oregon Legislature clarified their stance Jan. 10.

"We are committed to ensuring the legislative process is accessible and safe during the upcoming session," the statement said. "The recent wave of cases and hospitalizations due to the omicron variant is concerning. After speaking directly with OHSU infectious disease doctors and public health officials, we decided to move our committees to a virtual format."

Oregonians will be able to enter the Capitol during regular business hours and may watch legislative proceedings from the galleries of either chamber located on the third floor.

*See Omicron, Page A9*

### HERMISTON WARMING STATION



Marie Gonzalez, right, talks with volunteer Brodie Messenger, on Saturday, Jan. 8, 2022, while settling into the Hermiston Warming Station for the night.

## Refuge from the cold

### Guests at warming station address homelessness

By ERICK PETERSON  
*East Oregonian*

HERMISTON — When Sierra Gilman was homeless, she did not know of the Hermiston Warming Station, but she said she wished she had.

She worked her first day as a volunteer at the station on Saturday, Jan. 8. In this capacity, she checked in people as they sought refuge from the elements. She and others at the warming station spoke of life on the streets and their gratitude for this service.

Starting at 7:30 p.m., people who would otherwise be sleeping on the streets in the cold checked into the Hermiston Warming Station, 1075 S. Highway 395. The station opens every year as the weather becomes cold. Come morning, the guests of the station leave to resume their homelessness.

Gilman, 27, of Hermiston, said she learned of this volunteer opportunity last year. Her friends



Guests rest on the beds at the Hermiston Warming Station in the early hours of the evening Saturday, Jan. 8, 2022.

at her church — she is a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints — told her of the warming station. Now sober and free of drugs, she said she finally felt able to help out at the building.

Her training included a 30 to

40 minute session to learn the rules. Among other things, guests must turn over their possessions and store belongings in a plastic tote. They also must maintain a clean environment and a respectful tone with others.

In trade for following the

rules, guests have access to cots, where they sleep throughout the night. Also, they are provided with food and hygiene supplies. In addition, they can use washing machines and a shower. Volunteers stand ready to meet the needs of guests.

Gilman remembered back to her three to four years living without a home. She was addicted to drugs, she said, and she lived under the stars. She would camp on a space off Theater Lane in Hermiston. Hiding away, among trees, she was able to get rest.

It was a trying time, though she accepts responsibility for her troubles. She said she was making bad decisions, which included her drug use. Despite trying several times to correct her problems, she said she lacked the strength to turn her life around.

It was not until her sister died, she said, that she finally experienced an epiphany, and she had a "God moment." Suddenly, she

*See Refuge, Page A9*

ST. ANTHONY HOSPITAL & OREGON HEALTH AUTHORITY

NO APPOINTMENT NEEDED.

ESTIMATED RESULTS IN 3-5 DAYS

EVERY WEDNESDAY IN JANUARY 2022

11AM-1PM

ST. ANTHONY HOSPITAL

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