

Life above the clouds



Cloud and fog Friday, Jan. 14, 2022, cover northwestern Umatilla County at the base of Weston Mountain.

Ben Lonergan/East Oregonian

Umatilla County buys old VFW hall

By ERICK PETERSON
East Oregonian

HERMISTON — The flagpoles are as empty as the parking lot at the old Hermiston Veterans of Foreign Wars building, but this will not long be the case, according to Umatilla County Commissioner John Shafer.

The county recently bought the building at 45 W. Cherry Ave., Hermiston, for \$450,000, and it is going to house Umatilla County Community Corrections.

Shafer said the sale is all but complete, as the county board approved the purchase.

The building has been vacant in the wake of the VFW Department of Oregon shutting down the local post there for “failure to establish a meeting quorum or elect the required officers” while on suspension, according to notices n the building.

The Hermiston VFW’s loss, however, is Community Corrections’s gain, as Shafer said the community corrections department is in dire need. Currently housed at the Stafford Hansell Government Center, 915 S.E. Columbia Drive, Hermiston, County Corrections has run out of space, he said.

The office, which is serving a growing area, is staffed by people who hardly have room to function, Shafer said. He said staff must vacate their offices when group meetings are held. Also, some staff are operating in cramped conditions; they are working in offices that had been closets.

“We have employees who are in hallways with laptops,” Shafer said.

Without space for desktop computers or desk phones, they are using laptops and cell phones to conduct business.

Shafer said the move is “up in the air,” as he does not know exactly when Community Corrections will relocate.

“Once closing happens, we’re going to have to do a complete remodel of the new building and go from there,” he said.

Issues, including material acquisition, will affect the timeline for moving the department.

“I’d like to be in there by the end of the year,” he said.

Based upon initial inspections, Shafer said the building will be “taken down to the studs.” He stated the building is in good shape, but its layout is not “what we need it to be.” It is a big, open space, he said, which will require walls for security and privacy.

He said by leaving, UCCC will make room in the Stafford Hansell building for the district attorney’s office, the fair office or something else.

COMMUNITY BRIEFING

Fritsch shines spotlight on school board

PENDLETON — In recognition of National School Board Month, Superintendent Chris Fritsch paid tribute to the Pendleton School District Board of Directors during its Jan. 4 meeting. He highlighted the valuable role and work that the board plays in the lives of the district’s students and families.

The seven people serving on the board are Lynn Lieuallen, Beth Harrison, Julie Muller, Dale Freeman, Mason Murphy, Patrick Gregg and Preston Eagleheart.

“I hope you will join me in giving thanks to the seven people who lead and support our school district on behalf of our community,” Fritsch said in a statement at the meeting. “I am certain that being a school board member entails more than any of these individuals bargained for when they initially ran for the board.”

In addition, Fritsch said COVID-19 has resulted in additional issues for the district to deal with. He commended the group for providing strong leadership and a commitment to excellence for the district.

“We are fortunate to have such a dedicated group of people leading our school district,” Fritsch said. “Our district is without a doubt better because we have them on our team.”

Climate group serves ‘Food for Thought’

PENDLETON — A discussion about agriculture’s impact on the climate is the topic of the upcoming Climate Conversation Program hosted by the Eastern Oregon Climate Change Coalition.

Dominique Bachelet, an ecologist whose research has focused on the impacts of global climate change, will present “Food for Thought.” Bachelet, who teaches a pair of online classes about global change through Oregon State University, said 20-40% of human-caused greenhouse gas emissions are due to agriculture, including 10% from waste.

Held virtually, the free program is Tuesday, Jan. 18 at 7 p.m. Those interested are invited to request the Zoom login information by emailing eastoregonclimatechange@gmail.com.

Founded in 2017, the goal of EOC3 is to promote understanding and how to deal with the impact of the changing climate. The group provides an opportunity to share an open and respectful climate change conversation. For more information, email eastoregonclimatechange@gmail.com or search Facebook.

McMasters named to honor roll

BISMARCK, North Dakota — Ryan McMasters of Umatilla was named to the Bismarck State College President’s Honor Roll for the fall 2021 semester. He is an Echo High School graduate.

To qualify for the list, students must complete at least 12 semester hours while earning at least a 3.5 GPA. Douglas J. Jensen, the school’s president, said making the honor roll while facing additional challenges of living during a global pandemic is a significant accomplishment.

Bismarck State College is North Dakota’s only polytechnic institution. It specializes in technology and engi-

neering, applied and natural sciences, as well as workforce training and enrichment programs. For more information visit www.bismarckstate.edu.

Macy Rosselle receives academic honors

STILLWATER, Okla. — Macy Rosselle of Adams was named to the Oklahoma State University President’s Honor Roll for the fall 2021 semester. Students included in the list must complete 12 or more hours with a GPA of 4.0. A 2020 graduate of Pendleton High School, Rosselle is majoring in agriculture with a minor in agricultural business at OSU’s Ferguson College of Agriculture.

Established in 1890, OSU is a modern land-grant university, which focuses on agricultural and technical education in the United States. The school has more than 34,000 students enrolled across its five-campus system. For more information, visit www.go.okstate.edu.

Pilot Rock holding Covid-19, flu vaccination clinic

PILOT ROCK — Eastern Oregon Center for Independent Living is holding a vaccination clinic Wednesday, Jan. 19, 2-7 p.m. the Pilot Rock Fire District, 415 N.E. Elm St.

Moderna, Pfizer, and Johnson & Johnson vaccinations will be available, along with boosters. Vaccinations are available for adults and children 5 years and up. Flu shots also are available when getting a COVID-19 vaccination.

Individuals 12 years or older

receiving a COVID-19 vaccination or booster will receive a \$25 gift card. In addition, and the event will provide food boxes to the first 30 people vaccinated.

For more information regarding the clinic, contact Crescencia at 541-709-7898.

If you need a ride to get a vaccination, contact Kassandra to schedule transportation at 541-889-3119, ext. 109.

Arts center gets creative with Day of Service

PENDLETON — With the recent surge of COVID-19 cases, Pendleton Center for the Arts is getting creative with its annual work party. Each January, the arts center hosts the event as part of the Martin Luther King Day Jr. Day of Service.

To minimize the spread of the virus, instead of hosting one big work day with a lot of people around — the event typically attracts around 60 volunteers — the arts center is planning numerous small work sessions Tuesday, Jan. 18, through Friday, Jan. 21 — the MLK Week of Service.

Individuals, couples or small household groups are invited to sign up to work on a designated task in an area without others present. Roberta Lavador, executive director, said projects will take a maximum of two hours, with most taking much less time. Tasks include such things as dusting, painting or basic home repair.

Volunteers are encouraged to call the arts center to share their time and talents. For more information or to register to help, contact director@pendletonarts.org or 541-310-7413.

— EO Media Group

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