

Dog groomer encounters angrier clientele following pandemic

By ANTONIO SIERRA
East Oregonian



Ben Lonergan/East Oregonian

Tyler Marker brushes out Naudia during a grooming session Tuesday, Feb. 8, 2022, at Pupcakes in Pendleton.

PENDLETON — Pupcakes made an update to its Facebook page while bracing for blowback.

In a 305-word post made on Feb. 2, the Pendleton dog grooming and boarding business thanked its customers for their support but also alluded to the prospect of losing clients. All of Pupcakes' words were in service of announcing a policy change: The business now requires all customers to put their credit cards on file or prepay ahead of taking their dogs to Pupcakes.

In a Friday, Feb. 4, interview, Lesley Crosby explained why Pupcakes was changing its rules and why she expected an angry reaction from some corners of her customer base.

Crosby said she had considered implementing the policy in 2017 with the hopes it would curb missed appointments from clients. But she got heavy pushback from custom-

ers and shelved the idea.

During the early stages of the pandemic when many businesses were on lockdown, Crosby said customers grew more consistent about getting their dogs in on time, a trend she attributed to less people being at work.

"But as soon as the quarantine started to lift, it became its own pandemic of people missing appointments," she said.

Crosby estimated Pupcakes dealt with 20 appointments last week where a customer failed to show up or cancel ahead of time. She

said Pupcakes can try to bring in a waitlisted customer to fill the slot, but if they can't make the last-minute time window, the missed appointment just turns into lost business.

"I hate to make those changes, but if we don't, then we won't be around in a year

or two," she said. After announcing the new policy, Crosby said "98%" of the customers she talked with were understanding and supportive. But it's not just a rash of no-show appointments that's afflicting Pupcakes, but an increase in upset customers.

"Prior to the quarantine we would get one or two people that maybe were grumpy once in a while and now it's like a daily basis where someone is so stressed out that we end up getting it taken out on us," she said. "Whether it's pricing or how long it took for us to get their dog done, it's really hard to put into words how it seems that people have changed."

Crosby said her staff got cursed at after Pupcakes raised its prices for dog nail clipping services. The business also was threatened with lawsuits after customers tried to redeem expired loyalty points. She added that some employees have left Pupcakes after receiving "verbal beat-

ings" from customers. The prices Pupcakes charges for its services can be a sticking point for irate customers. Crosby said Pupcakes is a "mom and pop" business with seven employees, including herself. The prices the business charges are what is needed to cover Pupcakes' overhead costs, she said. While corporate pet stores such as Petco and PetSmart also offer grooming services, Crosby said most of their revenue is made through retail sales of pet products rather than grooming, an area where Pupcakes can't compete.

Crosby said she started Pupcakes as a gourmet dog treat business in 2013, expanding into grooming in 2015 and then boarding and daycare in 2016. She said she hopes Pupcakes' new policy will lead to less stress and more opportunities to expand her business into new areas, such as a private dog park and training area.

Hermiston taxi programs see drops and increases in 2021

East Oregonian

HERMISTON — Ridership in Hermiston's Senior & Disabled Taxi Program declined in 2021 while its Workforce On-Demand Ride Cooperative program saw a slight increase in its second full calendar year of operation.

The Senior & Disabled Taxi Program provides service for eligible Hermiston residents to locations within city limits. According to a press release Monday, Feb. 7, from the city, between 2017-19 the program averaged 18,000-20,000 rides per year, but that fell in 2021 to 12,191 rides.

The service has primarily been used for trips to medical appointments, shopping,

public events, and gatherings.

"The past couple of years have disrupted people's regular routines due to cancelled appointments and events, and that seems to be having an impact on how many people are using the taxi service," Assistant City Manager Mark Morgan said in the release. "We know that routine and familiarity are important in helping people choose to use a public transit option like the taxi service, so we want to help remind folks that this easy and reliable system is here to help."

Vouchers for the program are \$2.50 each and are available for purchase at Hermiston City Hall. Residents who are 60 years or older or have an eligible disability under Social Security, the Public

Employee Retirement System or other recognized agency may apply.

The city also reported its WORC program issued 7,041 ride vouchers in 2021, a slight increase from the 7,020 issued in 2020. The majority of these rides — 62% — were within Hermiston city limits with many users getting rides to service-sector and retail workplaces.

The program offers rides to workplaces in Hermiston, Umatilla or Stanfield and ticket pricing is based on distance between the worksite and pickup/drop off location.

For more information about the city of Hermiston's transit options, including taxi service and the fixed-route HART bus service, visit www.hermiston.or.us/transit.

LOCAL BRIEFING

Veteran prosecutor returns to Umatilla County DA's Office

PENDLETON — A familiar face is back in the ranks of the Umatilla County District Attorney's Office.

Umatilla County Commissioner George Murdock reported Jaclyn Jenkins once again is going to handle prosecutions in Umatilla County.

Jenkins was the chief deputy prosecuting attorney in January 2021 when she left for a role with the U.S. Attorney's District of Oregon office in Portland.

But a year later, according to Murdock, Jenkins is returning to family, friends and her professional colleagues in Umatilla County.

One of those colleagues is Daniel Pachico. He came to the county in March 2010 and left for private practice in June 2020. But he returned to the district attorney's office Feb. 1, 2021.



Jenkins

Pachico was the county's chief deputy prosecutor. Murdock reported the county board at an administrative meeting on Friday, Feb. 4, voted to give Jenkins the title of chief deputy district attorney for Umatilla County with an assignment in Hermiston.

Murdock also reported District Attorney Dan Primus said Jenkins' return was a great day for Umatilla County and a great day for his office.

More deaths in Umatilla County from COVID-19

UMATILLA COUNTY — Umatilla County Public Health on Tuesday, Feb. 8, reported COVID-19 claimed the lives of two more county residents.

The county's 195 death related to the disease is a 70-year-old woman who tested positive on Jan. 14 and died Feb. 3 at Good Shepherd Medical Center, Hermiston. The 196th death related to COVID-19 is a 72-year-old man who tested positive on Jan. 23 and died Feb. 5, also at Good Shepherd Medical Center.

The county health department also reported 67 new COVID-19 cases, bringing the county's total number of cases as of Feb. 8 to 21,737.

—EO Media Group

Good Shepherd Medical Center upgrades its MRI

East Oregonian

HERMISTON — Good Shepherd Medical Center, Hermiston, recently completed construction and installation of the best MRI technology available to hospitals today.

Good Shepherd in a press release Tuesday, Feb. 8, announced the new MRI machine is open to patients this week in the hospital's Diagnostic Imaging Department at 610 N.W. 11th St., Hermiston.

Robert Rose, Good Shepherd's Diagnostic Imaging manager, said in the press release the Canon Orion MRI is on par with what is available in a major metropolitan area or university-based medical center.

"From a quality stand-

point, there is no reason for our community to travel out of the area for MRI needs," he stated.

This MRI is more comfortable, quieter and faster than other MRI machines, according to Good Shepherd, and delivers the clearest, full-quality image available.

MRIs at Good Shepherd now take 20 minutes compared to the former 30-40 minutes and generate a collection of images in multiple orientations, according to the press release. And the MRI room even has a lighting system that can change hues if the patient so desires.

For more information on the Canon Orion MRI, visit www.gshealth.org/diagnostic-imaging/magnetic-resonance-imaging-mri.

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Marry Me (PG13)
3:40p 6:20p 9:00p
extra 1:00p show 2/11-2/13

Blacklight (PG13)
3:50p 6:30p 9:10p
extra 1:10p show 2/11-2/13

Moonfall (PG13)
4:00p 6:40p 9:20p
extra 1:20p show 2/11-2/13

Jackass Forever (R)
4:10p 6:50p 9:30p
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Ashley Smith is a Nurse Practitioner, specializing in the care of patients of all ages. She is Board Certified with the American Academy of Nurse Practitioners, and is a graduate of Gonzaga University.

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