

Gubernatorial candidate checks out Martha's House

By ERICK PETERSON
East Oregonian

HERMISTON — Oregon gubernatorial candidate Stan Pulliam said he is visiting all corners of Oregon to learn how locals take on the state's biggest problems.

The Republican, who is the mayor of Sandy, brought his campaign Thursday, Feb. 10, to Eastern Oregon with a morning stop in Boardman and an afternoon tour of Martha's House in Hermiston.

"I'm a mayor, and so I've always really heavily believed in local control and local solutions to our problems," he said.

His visit to Martha's House gave him opportunity to see how Hermiston is handling its housing shortage. He said Martha's House impressed him with its community engagement.

"My experience as someone who grew up in my hometown of being involved in service organizations is that there is something special about the feeling when you are able to help out a fellow neighbor," he said.

When a person is trying to transition out of situations that aren't



Ben Lonergan/East Oregonian

Stan Pulliam, Sandy mayor and Oregon GOP gubernatorial candidate, speaks with administrative staff Thursday, Feb. 10, 2022, at Martha's House in Hermiston.

favorable, there is opportunity to help, he said, and that is "a special deal."

Pulliam expressed his hope he can help people, too, by addressing the concerns of locals.

The tour has concentrated on "a

lot of Main Street businesses," he said, and he added his campaign started with such operations. But the tour also takes in places such as Martha's House, in addition to schools, where he could explore educational options.

"We've done a tour through southern Oregon so far," he said. "This is our second leg of the tour. On that one, we went up through Eugene and Springfield to Medford and Grants Pass."

The next stint brought them Feb. 9 to The Dalles, and then to Boardman the morning of Feb. 10 before the visit in Hermiston and a meet-and-greet that night in Pendleton. Next, the tour heads to the coast.

"We're trying to cover all of the corners of the state," Pulliam said. "What we're trying to see is what are the different solutions in the different corners of the state that different neighbors are figuring out on how to tackle our biggest problems," he said.

Pulliam on mask mandates, COVID-19

While in Boardman, he addressed several topics, including mask mandates.

"I think it's time for personal choice on masks," he said.

He repeated his message in Hermiston after his tour of Martha's House.

As he took the tour, he wore a mask, and he said it was important to respect businesses and organi-

zations when they required mask usage. Still, he stated people should have the option to decide if masks are right for them or not.

He said he was vaccinated and has isolated himself whenever he felt ill.

"I do not know whether or not I have had COVID," he said.

He said may have had it, he said, but he does not think "we should test every time we aren't feeling well" and instead, "We should just do the right thing, which is follow the doctor's orders, and isolate and not go to work, and not try to spread our viruses to one another."

Getting a taste of the local

While communicating his messages, including his opinion on COVID-19 protection, Pulliam said he has enjoyed visiting different places in Oregon. In Hermiston, he stopped by Obie's Express for a cup of coffee. He and his wife both gave "two thumbs up" to the coffee and bagels.

"We try to get to the local places," he said. "And that's one of the coolest things about the state. We find ourselves sometimes in communities learning how special and cool they are."

Milton-Freewater chocolatier pairs her sweets with Walla Walla wines

By MARGAUX
MAXWELL

Walla Walla Union-Bulletin

MILTON-FREEWATER — There's nothing subtle about Lan Wong and James Boulanger's purple and yellow Craftsman-style house on South Main Street in Milton-Freewater.

Wandering through its large pink door, you'll find the pair making their signature dark chocolate ganache truffles for what is the chocolatiers' busiest time of the year: Valentine's Day.

The couple converted their nearly 100-year-old home into a chocolate shop, Petits Noirs, when they moved to the Walla Walla Valley in 2005. The name translates to "little darks," an homage to Wong's

love of dark chocolate and her French heritage.

"I love sweets! I'm the type of person who always looks at the dessert menu before dinner," Wong said.

Patrons choose from a huge assortment of flavors at the display case, such as Pendleton Whisky Hazelnut, Dulce de Leche Sea Salt and Champagne, in colorful packaging Wong designs herself.

Her confections are infused with fresh herbs or figs, often grown in her backyard garden in the rural town.

"When James and I met in New York, he always talked about moving back here," Wong said.

Boulanger grew up in Walla Walla, landing his first baking gig at John's Wheatland Bakery in Eastgate while

a student at Walla Walla High School.

Boulanger worked at bakeries throughout the Northwest before taking a job at Sullivan Street Bakery in New York making European-style bread. When he met Wong, she was working at MarieBelle, a handmade chocolate shop in SoHo.

Though she didn't anticipate where life would take her at the time, she was already unknowingly preparing for her move to the Walla Walla Valley.

For the love of wine and chocolate

"I started my own side business in New York doing wine pairings with chocolate, and chocolate tours and classes," Wong said. Boulanger often spoke of Walla Walla's

up-and-coming wine scene, and eventually the pair took the leap of faith to move.

Now chocolate and wine pairing is one of Petits Noirs' many specialties in a region home to more than 120 wineries.

Leading up to Valentine's Day, the chocolate shop teams up with area wineries such as Isenhower Cellars and Saviah Cellars.

"We sit down with winemakers to figure out what they want to highlight in their wine, and then we make the chocolate for it," said Wong. Area wineries often offer these pairings to visitors on Valentine's Day weekend.

Wong noted chocolate and wine share similar characteristics such as tannins and acidity. Milton-Freewater

is situated within the Rocks District viticultural area, a sub-appellation of the Walla Walla Valley AVA, which has a distinct flavor profile that pairs with a specific type of chocolate.

Cherry star anise, a favorite flavor at Petits Noirs, for example, highlights the fruit and oaky tones in the region's terroir.

Putting Milton-Freewater on the candy map

Milton-Freewater still is expanding when Wong and Boulanger first came to the Valley.

Later that year, Watermill Winery opened, bringing more visibility to the small city. Tourists began to cross the Washington-Oregon state

line, which helped sustain the growing chocolate business.

Wong designed a fold-out map she dubbed "the Secrets of Milton-Freewater" with activities for tourists, such as museums, blueberry picking or farm stand locations, and handed it out to customers in her first years of operation.

The Eastern Oregon Visitor's Association later approached Wong about adopting her map, now known as the Whisky & Rocks Farm Loop.

Milton-Freewater continues to see economic growth, as more entrepreneurs like Wong and Boulanger open their doors in the area. The city reported a total of 212 businesses in 2020, and now boasts 33 winegrowers within the Rocks District.

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