

EAST OREGONIAN

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BMCC

More layoffs likely

By ANTONIO SIERRA
East Oregonian

PENDLETON — Blue Mountain Community College is anticipating employee layoffs for the third year in a row.

In a Thursday, Feb. 10 interview, BMCC President Mark Browning said the college is early in its budgeting process, but leaders are anticipating eliminating positions as enrollment continues to fall.

Browning said Blue Mountain's \$44.2 million budget was based on the college enrolling the equivalent of 1,000 students. But BMCC's actual enrollment during the fall and winter terms has been below that number and the college's administration now is projecting a 3% enrollment decline for next year.

Browning said it's too soon to know how many positions the college needs to cut or where they will come from. But for BMCC, it portends another year of pink slips and tough budget conversations.

Under former President Dennis Bailey-Fougner, Blue Mountain eliminated 23 positions, including 11 layoffs in 2019. His successor, interim President Connie Green, recommended laying off another 11 employees as a part of a 16-job contraction. When the Oregon Department of Corrections restructured its prison education program, the college also was forced to make cuts.

Browning attributed the impending reductions to outside factors: a strong job market that was leading many prospective students to the job market instead of community college and lingering uncertainty from the coronavirus pandemic.

"I can go to Wendy's and make \$18 bucks (per hour)," he said. "In some ways, we're overperforming."

While the college will outline its cost-cutting strategy in the coming months, Browning said he would like to make future "adjustments" to the college's collective bargaining agreement with the BMCC faculty union.

"We've got to jump ahead of it to where we can be a little more flexible and be able to adjust in a better fashion and honestly, it's going to take an adjustment in the collective bargaining agreement,"

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Browning



Ben Lonergan/East Oregonian

Veronica Flores, right, and her wife Chacha Flores prepare food Saturday, Feb. 12, 2022, during a fundraiser at their restaurant, Vero's Kravingz in Hermiston. The fundraiser was for the funeral expenses of Chacha's mother, who died last week.

Owners of new restaurant honor late mother-in-law

Vero's Kravings in Hermiston holds fundraiser to help pay for funeral

By ERICK PETERSON
East Oregonian

HERMISTON — Veronica Flores opened her new restaurant Vero's Kravingz, and soon after closed it for about a week when tragedy hit her family.

Her mother-in-law, Irene Flores Jr., died.

Veronica Flores reopened Saturday, Feb. 12, and immediately hosted a fundraiser to bring in cash for funeral expenses and a burial in Toppenish, Washington. There was a jar for donations and raffle items for a drawing.

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Ben Lonergan/East Oregonian

A poster board with photos of Irene Flores sits on the counter Saturday, Feb. 12, 2022, at Vero's Kravingz in Hermiston as the restaurant, which her daughter and daughter-in-law own, holds a fundraiser for Flores' funeral expenses.

Highland Manor residents host yard sale ahead of vacating

By ERICK PETERSON
East Oregonian

HERMISTON — February is not typically yard sale weather, but a few Hermiston residents may not be able to wait until warmer months to host sales at their home.

The tenants of Highland Manor, a 46-unit complex are on notice to vacate their apartments. Clover Housing Group LLC, the new owner of Highland Manor, has offered tenants \$2,000 if they leave by the end of the month. Clover Housing reported it plans to start renovations as soon as the complex is empty.

So, a few residents Saturday, Feb. 12, braved temperatures in the low 30s, set up tables in the apartment's parking lot and put out items for sale. Saying they were clearing out their homes and trying to make a few bucks before moving, they expressed disappointment about their situation.

Parting with a well-loved home

Jennifer Baros, Highland Manor resident, said she has lived in her apartment for five years and she was happy with her home.

"I've loved it," she said.

She said that she appreciated her manager, the apartment amenities and the maintenance. Whenever she had problems with her apartment, it always was fixed quickly.

"I couldn't have asked better from a first apartment," she said.

The 24-year-old Baros said she moved into Highland Manor after leaving her parents' home and getting married. She is raising two boys and reported having good memories.

Her neighbors, she said, are like family. A couple of them, she added, are literal family. Throughout their years together, she and neighbors

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Erick Peterson/East Oregonian

Jennifer Baros, Highland Manor resident, stands behind a table of yard sale items Saturday, Feb. 12, 2022. She is among the tenants moving out of the Hermiston apartment complex. The new owner is encouraging people to leave so he can renovate.



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