

# Restaurant:

Continued from Page A1

A large photo of her mother-in-law was on a stand next to the cash register.

Chacha Flores, Veronica Flores' wife, was at the register for the reopening. It was Chacha's mother who died.

"My mom was wonderful," she said.

Rudy Flores, Chacha Flores' uncle and Irene Flores' brother, also expressed his sadness over the death. His sister, he said, was a special woman.

"Irene was a fun-loving person," he said. "She always brought everyone's spirits up. If you had a problem, you could talk to her. She could bring you out of a slump."

His sister always was ready to laugh.

"You could call her with a sad moment, and she'd turn it around and make it a joking moment," he said.

She also "was really good," he added, "about reminding you of God and that God's there for us."

The family, Rudy Flores said, has had a string of deaths recently. COVID-19 caused the deaths of cousins and other family members, he said. Irene Flores had the disease, but he attributed her death to a busted vein.

"She was a big part of our lives," Veronica Flores said. "She was always with us."

The restaurant owner credited her mother-in-law for being one of the people who encouraged her to open Vero's Kravingz. Irene Flores even created a food, her special enchiladas, which soon will appear on the menu,



Ben Lonergan/East Oregonian  
**Laura Steffen drops a new pan of bacon-covered hot dogs into the warmer Saturday, Feb. 12, 2022, at Vero's Kravingz in Hermiston.**

Veronica Flores said.

Chacha said the enchiladas have been passed down through generations, which make them special in her family.

"Everybody makes enchiladas. They all taste good," she said. "They all have their

"handfuls."

"Mom's not here, so we've got to perfect it before we let anybody try it," Chacha Flores said of her mother's enchiladas.

Compounding the loss of Irene Flores, they said, was that she never was able to visit

**"I'VE ALWAYS WANTED TO OPEN A RESTAURANT, EVEN WHEN I WAS A KID."**

— Veronica Flores, Owner of Vero's Kravingz

own flavors. My grandma and my mom have this unique recipe that they'd make all the time, and everybody in the family loves them."

The restaurant plans to put the dish on the menu as "Mama Irene's Enchiladas," though the owner said she would have to work on the recipe first. As with many home cooks, she said, her mother-in-law did not use standard measurements. Rather, ingredients were measured in "pinches" and

the restaurant.

### Making a dream a reality

Vero's Kravingz is at 1725 N. First St., Hermiston. It occupies the space the Delish Bistro once operated in.

Veronica Flores, 24, said opening the establishment, her first restaurant, is a lifelong dream.

"I've always wanted to open a restaurant, even when I was a kid," she said.

Previous to opening Vero's

Kravingz, she was a night manager at a local McDonald's. This job, she said, did not suit her. She enjoyed the customers but had conflicts with other management. She said she quit and planned to operate her own business, where she would be responsible for decisions.

Later, she said, she began making food and selling it in her home. She did this until she discovered it was illegal. Then, she made plans to open the restaurant.

Vero's Kravingz sells mulitas, birria pizza, birria quesadilla, tacos and more. Birria is traditionally made with goat, but Vero's Kravingz makes it in a modern style with beef instead. Veronica Flores said she learned about it on TikTok, before researching it and making it herself.

She opened Vero's Kravingz on Jan. 15, and she said business has been good.

"We've been busy," she said.

She added that her restaurant sold all of its food almost every day in the first week. After having this early success, she decided to open for breakfast, serving food such as biscuits and gravy.

She measures her success in more than sales, however, she said. She has family and friends working alongside her, and this has been an enjoyable part of her success, she said.

Looking at the success of Delish Bistro, which is the previous occupant of her restaurant's space, Veronica Flores said she hopes she can do likewise. She said she wants to grow her business and eventually move into a location with seating.

# Sale:

Continued from Page A1

have frequently chatted about the ups and downs of their lives and have enjoyed one another's company.

Since this is the case, she said she feels let down by having to move. Her plans are to move in with her parents. Baros said she would like to start looking to buy a house, but there are not many places to live in town and prices are high, she said.

Like other tenants at Highland Manor, she pays \$630 for a two-bedroom apartment.

Baros said she is trying to vacate her apartment by Feb. 19.

### 'We don't have energy to fight'

Another tenant, Karen Dela Cruz, also had set up a table at the yard sale, offering gardening equipment and other goods.

Dela Cruz, who has been renting a two-bedroom apartment for the last three years, lives with her husband and a dog that she refers to as her emotional support animal. At 72 years old, she said, she has health problems as does her husband. She added her situation with the apartment has exacerbated their illnesses, causing stress.

She said she would fight the request to move, but she does not know how to begin such a fight.

"We don't have energy to fight," she said. "We just have to find a place."

Her daughters, she said, are looking for a new home for them. And though Dela Cruz expressed gratitude for the help, she said she is a little worried.

"We can afford to pay our own rent, but it's getting to where we can't,"

she said.

She added she doubts she could find an apartment with rent as low as the \$630 she pays now.

She also expressed uncertainty about finding a home she likes as much as Highland Manor, where she has been able to have a garden. She placed a bench and potted plants with tall flowers in the garden. And, she said, she has enjoyed sitting on the bench among the flowers and taking in the sunshine.

On Feb. 12, she was selling her flower pots and her bench. If she starts a new garden, it will have to be somewhere else, she said.

### Resident has help but others don't

Another resident, Lindsay Lloyd, expressed the same feelings as her neighbors. While also selling items at her yard sale, she spoke of her three years living in a two-bedroom apartment.

"There's definitely nothing out here that's this affordable," Lloyd said. "They're outdated, but they've been kept up really, really nice"

She said she likes her apartment manager, and she appreciates the way the apartments have been kept clean and safe.

As she is the office manager of a Hermiston radio station, Lloyd said she will need to stay local. She stated she will move back in with her parents.

"I'm thankful that they're in the area and willing to help out," she said.

This situation, however, will not be permanent, and she said she will need to find another place to live. And like the other residents at the yard sale, she said she is concerned about her neighbors who might not have the same support she does.

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# BMCC:

Continued from Page A1

he said. "Because, right now, I can't go and eliminate one instructor in one program and one in another and just adjust the program that way.

You have to shut the program down. That's how it has to be done and I think that's a really poor approach to business."

Previous rounds of layoffs and budget cuts have come with pushback from the faculty union, and in a statement, union President Pete Hernberg struck an optimistic tone.

"The college's enrollment has begun to stabilize — in fact our enrollment is doing much better than many other community colleges around the state," he said. "Because of how the state's funding formula works, this means we'll get a bigger piece of the pie. Although we have a far

smaller faculty than we used to, we're proud of the work that everyone is doing to rebuild enrollment."

Browning said the college is taking the right steps to reverse recent trends and grow enrollment, but the long-term financial outlook for Blue Mountain remains uncertain.

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