

YouTube provides key platform for Pendleton RV dealer

By JOHN TILLMAN
East Oregonian

PENDLETON — Thompson RV in Pendleton is dealing with short staffing and supply chain issues, yet sales are staying hot.

Corrin Thompson manages internet sales and the website for the business. She said Thompson RV does not just rely on the local population.

“We sell to the whole country online,” she said.

The business is on Facebook and Instagram, and its website remains an entry portal, but YouTube is its main sales tool. She said the businesses videos on the streaming platform show complete walk-throughs, from floor plans down to every detail. Trailer blogs and contacts among potential customers rapidly spread the word. She said

Thompson RV recently had 15,000 views in three days.

“People buy our trailers without ever having been in one,” Thompson said. “I just sold a trailer to a guy in Egypt. He’s heading back to the U.S. after 10 years.”

The dealership is the top retailer for Outdoors RV Back Country trailers. Outdoors RV Manufacturing in La Grande makes just 2,000 of the trailers per year. The “Green Book” recreational vehicle guide rates Outdoors models as No. 1.

The Outdoors models have higher ground clearance than Airstreams and are insulated. A 26-foot Airstream requires two air conditioners. Outdoors trailers also cost less. A 25-foot Outdoors costs \$70,000, while an Airstream of that length goes for \$170,000.



Kathy Aney/East Oregonian

Thompson RV co-owners Carolyn Thompson, Burton Thompson and Corrin Thompson gather Tuesday, May 3, 2022, on a Pendleton retail lot where they say business is booming despite inflation and rising fuel prices.

“Our customers are willing to wait for the best,” she said. “Often buyers are planning in advance for retirement, so waiting isn’t a problem for them.”

Thompson RV parts sales manager Kelly Fox said that

wait time is about a year.

“We’re backlogged,” he said,

Thompson RV also sells Keystone trailers. The company is the top manufacturer of towable RVs in North America. It boasts more than

a million owners, 5,000 team members and more than a million square feet of manufacturing space in Goshen, Indiana and Pendleton.

“RV sales are record-setting,” Fox added. “After the 2020 election, sales took off. Baby boomers are retiring and selling their houses. Or people buy an RV, since it’s cheaper than adding onto a house.”

While recreational vehicle sales are through the roof, supply chain issues are hitting Thompson.

“Supply is extremely poor depending on the part,” Fox said, “but overall, we have to wait months and the prices are high. They’ve gone up 20 to 30%.”

Still, higher interest rates and prices haven’t depressed trailer sales. While demand for RVs is high regionally and nationwide, Thompson is doing even better than trailer

sales in general.

“It’s not as if people shut in during the pandemic suddenly decided to buy RVs,” Thompson said. “But it did boost sales. However, we’ve grown steadily.”

And like other businesses, Thompson RV is seeking more employees.

“We’re short-handed,” Fox said.

The business already hired several new people, going from 10 employees to about 15 or 17.

“We keep growing, but we have high standards, so it’s tough to find good applicants,” Thompson added.

The RV business used to be seasonal, with peak sales in May to October. Thus, it made sense to keep fewer staff.

“We just worked harder during the summer, then never laid anyone off in winter,” she continued. “But now it’s more year-round.”

LOCAL BRIEFING

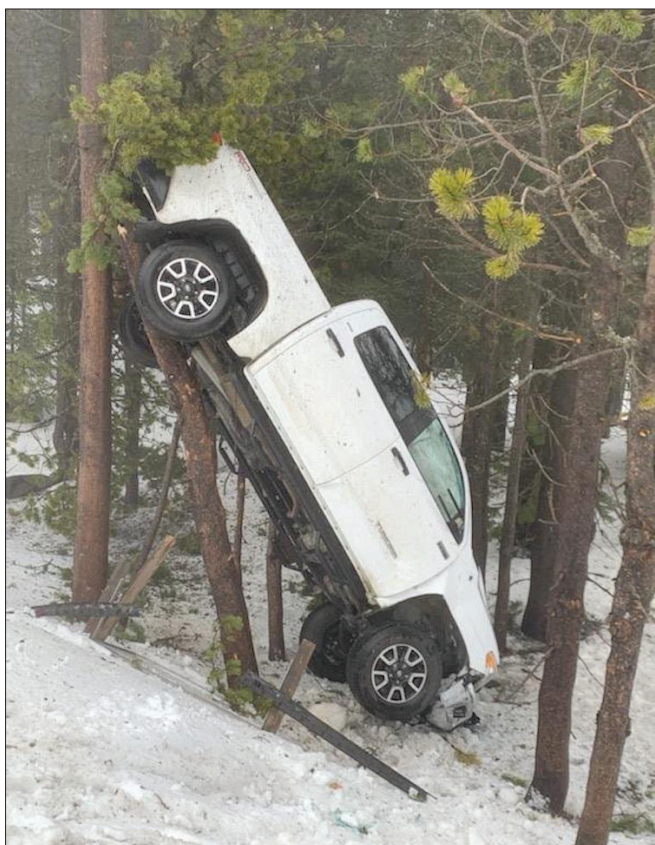
Rescuers free driver from crashed pickup

WESTON — Rescuers freed the driver of a pickup Tuesday morning, May 3, after it ran off the road near Weston and crashed.

East Umatilla Fire & Rescue in a news release reported it responded to a call at 7:52 a.m. on Highway 204 for a pickup that ran off the road and ended up with a tree against the driver’s side door.

The weather on Highway 204 was slightly icy and foggy, according to the news release. The fire district’s personnel arrived to find a pickup nose down in snow with the rear several feet off the ground and stuck on a tree. Airbags in the cab had opened.

A crew freed the driver through the front windshield. The person suffered minor injuries. East Umatilla Fire & Rescue took the person to a local hospital.



Mark Woodbright/East Umatilla Fire & Rescue

Hermiston resident steps into health leadership role

HERMISTON — Greater Oregon Behavioral Health Inc. hired Lourdes Reyna Alcalá to be its regional community health development manager. She started the position April 11.

“I’m really happy to join the team,” she said.

GOBHI is an administrative services organization for Eastern Oregon Coordinated Care Organization. EOCCO is a partnership between local health agencies, which also includes Hermiston’s Good Shepherd Health Care System, Pendleton’s CHI St. Anthony Hospital and the Yakima Farm Workers Clinic.

In her new position, Reyna Alcalá oversees the department as it works with other EOCCO providers in 12 counties.

She said the biggest challenge of the role is maintaining key community partners and collaborating on changes when they are needed.

A recent GOBHI press release stated Reyna Alcalá is a “familiar face among local civic and human services work groups,” as she is a longtime Hermiston resident. She said housing and food costs have been important to her, and her job includes working on these issues, as they relate to health.

According to GOBHI, Reyna Alcalá is fluent in English and Spanish holds a bachelor’s degree from Washington State University and is completing a master’s degree in special education from the University of Oregon.

“We’re thrilled for Lourdes to come aboard and lead this community role,”

GOBHI CEO Karen Wheeler said. “Her expertise in collaboration with diverse communities in Eastern Oregon will help take us to the next level in uplifting local voices and improving services for residents.”

— EO Media Group

WILDHORSE RESORT & CASINO
4/29 - May 5
Cineplex Show Times

Price changes: Adults: \$10.00 • Child: \$8.00
Senior: \$8.00 • Matinees (before 4:00pm): \$8.00

Doctor Strange in the Multiverse of Madness (PG13)
4:30p 5:10p 7:40p 8:20p
extra 1:20p and 2:00p
show 5/6-5/8

.....
The Northman (R)
4:50p 7:50p
extra 1:50p
show 5/6-5/8

.....
The Bad Guys (PG)
3:50p 6:30p 9:10p
extra 1:10p
show 5/6-5/8

.....
Sonic the Hedgehog 2 (PG)
3:40p 6:20p 9:00p
extra 1:00p
show 5/6-5/8

wildhorsesresort.com • 541-966-1850
Pendleton, OR I-84 - Exit 216

UMATILLA

Econo Lodge hotel manager credits community for award

East Oregonian

UMATILLA — The Econo Lodge in Umatilla recently won an award, according to Lynne Kitrel, hotel manager.

“We’ve received a Platinum Award from Choice,” she said.

Choice Hotels International Inc. owns Econo Lodge and several other hotel brands. According to Kitrel, only 3% of Econo Lodge hotels in the U.S. received this distinction.

This is a big deal, she said, for the former Tillicum Inn, 1481 Sixth St., Umatilla. Its history under its former name includes a fire in 2017. It was renovated, rebranded and reopened in 2018, but has

faced recent challenges, Kitrel said, coming back from the pandemic.

She said the hotel received its award based on customer reviews. On the Choice website, customers have given the hotel a rating of 3.9 out of 5 stars, with 83% of customers recommending it.

Recommendations praise the service, comfort, food and more. Where there are complaints, including one issue with cold water in the shower, management has responded online with apologies.

Kitrel said she and her staff are working hard to create a positive experience for their customers, though she added that the entire city of Umatilla deserves credit.

“It was very much a team effort,” she said. “If you look at those reviews, it’s not just us that made this. It’s the Bridge Bistro (& Brews), Java Junkies, Harvest Foods and the people of this community in Umatilla.”

She added she could have “the cleanest hotel in the world,” and it would not have mattered if her neighbors were not stellar. Thanks to them, she said, visitors to her hotel are pleased with their experience.

“It’s really nice to see Umatilla sprouting up so nicely,” she said.

She said the hotel will soon receive a plaque, which will be placed in the hotel.

Good Shepherd Outreach & Events

May is Older American’s Month

Good Shepherd’s Community Health & Outreach offers free health screenings for community members of all ages!

Healthy Cooking on a Budget

Second Tuesday of the month (May 10, 2022)

Walk with Ease

May 23 – July 1, M/W/F

GOOD SHEPHERD
COMMUNITY HEALTH & OUTREACH
541-667-3509 | healthinfo@gshealth.org



EOCI
Hiring
Plumber

Must have valid Oregon
Plumber’s License

Apply by 5/16/2022

odocjobs.com
Search for Oregon Job
Opportunities

\$4,772 - \$6,978/month