

Recent Hermiston girls soccer coach in jail on sex crimes

East Oregonian

HERMISTON — Recent Hermiston High Schools girls soccer head coach Freddy Delapaz Guizar is in the Umatilla County Jail, Pendleton, on four counts of first-degree sexual abuse.

Guizar, 31, has been the head coach of the team since 2018. Before that, he was an assistant coach on the Hermiston High School boys

soccer team from the 2014-15 season to the 2018-19 season.

The Hermiston School District Athletics and Activities Director Larry Usher on July 26 announced Omar Medina as the next Hermiston High School head girls soccer coach. Hermiston School District Superintendent Tricia Mooney issued the following statement regarding the arrest:

“Hermiston School

District’s top priority is the safety of our students in all settings. Every teacher, coach and adviser undergo a thorough background and reference check and is required to know and follow district policy regarding interaction with students at all times.

“In accordance with state law, board policy and staff training, we also require that suspected abuse of any kind be reported immedi-

ately, regardless of when or where it happens, and we work closely with the Hermiston Police Department to follow up on all reports. We encourage any parent or student who suspects or experiences abuse to alert authorities, whether that be a school administrator or law enforcement.”

Hermiston Police Department and Umatilla County District Attorney’s Office

are handling all aspects of the investigation into allegations made against Guizar, according to Mooney’s statement.

“When he applied to be a coach, there was no criminal history that would have prohibited him from the position,” she concluded.

Hermiston police on Wednesday, July 27, arrested Guizar. State court records show a Umatilla County grand jury the day before

indicted Garza on four counts of first-degree sexual assault.

The indictment accuses Garza of abusing one youth on three occasions between Dec. 20, 2013, and June 13, 2016, and another youth one time between April 30, 2012, and April 29, 2014. Both youths were under the age of 14.

This is a breaking news story. The East Oregonian will update with more information as soon as possible.

New plant store owner sees changing downtown landscape as positive

By ANTONIO ARREDONDO
East Oregonian

PENDLETON — A Pendleton business owner branched out this past month with a new venture, and already is seeing returns in a changing city.

Erin Purchase, co-owner of the local dispensary Kind Leaf, opened her latest project, Prism Botanicals, just more than a month ago at 421 S. Main St.

After stepping away from full-time operations at the dispensary, the entrepreneurial Purchase looked for more ideas. She said she hopes Prism, a plant shop, can help bring some big city atmosphere to downtown Pendleton.

A native of the area, Purchase said she wants Prism to have the aesthetic of a “store from the (Willamette) Valley,” a place where small plant shops are not uncommon. With the cost of living near the Portland area rising, she predicted many residents will be moving to Pendleton and said she wants to have something in the area that suits them.

Her selection of flora ranges from common houseplants, such as the spider plant, to more exotic gifts in the variegated Monstera.

In addition to plants, Purchase sells homemade jewelry and metaphysical products, while also putting



Yasser Marte/East Oregonian

Daughter MyKayla Comstock, 17, left, and mother Erin Purchase, 35, talk about plants and trying to sell more local art crafts Thursday, July 28, 2022, at Prism Botanicals, Purchase’s new business on Main Street, Pendleton.

on exhibits where artists show off their work.

“I built (Prism Botanicals) to help local artists,” Purchase said. “We carry a variety of artists from the state of Oregon.”

Starting the shop has been a 10-month process for Purchase and a way for her to get out on her feet. The family-oriented location also is family operated. Purchase’s mother Suzanne and daughter MyKayla work there.

The Main Street store is part of a recent revitalization of the downtown area. Purchase pointed to newer businesses, including the 2018 addition OMG! Burgers & Brew and the 2016 addition of Oregon Grain Growers Brand Distillery as

examples. And the MotoLodge recently opened several blocks away at 310 S.E. Dorion Ave.

It’s a downtown section of town that sees increased traffic every September for Round-Up, but also for other events throughout the year. The changing landscape is something Purchase said she sees as a positive for the community.

As for Prism Botanicals, all sales are in-store, but Purchase said she has plans to add online services as well as travel to farmers markets. Even just with the in-store sales, she said she already has been pleased by the early encouragement.

“The receptiveness has been amazing,” Purchase said. “We truly live in a beautiful city.”

LOCAL BRIEFING

Walchli Farms hopes for watermelon harvest to begin Monday

HERMISTON — Walchli Farms of Hermiston hopes to start watermelon harvest by Monday, Aug. 1.

“We have seeded and seedless melons,” Patrick Walchli said. “Both varieties ripen at the same time.”

Walchli Farms has grown Hermiston watermelons for generations, its Facebook page read. Besides its famous melons, Walchli grows a variety of in-season produce, such as potatoes, hay and wheat. Asparagus is available from mid-April to June.

“We are waiting for those melons to be just perfect before we start harvesting,” the site said. “Our team has been busy getting things ready. Our shop will open once harvest begins. Thank you for your patience and please stay tuned. We will post right here once we get rolling.”

Watermelons had a slow growing season, but are coming on rapidly, Mike Walchli said.

“The melons are sure going to be sweet, thanks to the heat,” he said. “Our workers are seasoned and know how to take care of themselves during heat waves. They stay hydrated. We start work at 5 o’clock and knock off at 3 to 4.”

Umatilla County reports 2 new COVID-19 deaths

PENDLETON — The Umatilla County Public Health Department reported two new deaths attributed to COVID-19 for Monday through Thursday, July 25-28. The total toll for the county now stands at 237 fatalities for the disease.

The health department’s dashboard recorded 57 new COVID-19 cases for the same reporting period, and a pandemic total of 24,076.

Morrow County reported two new cases July 28, bringing its total to 3,147. The county has suffered 37 deaths from or with COVID-19.

— EO Media Group

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An Open Letter to the Public

Due to the ongoing confusion about the current situation, we are sharing this statement with media and concerned Morrow County residents.

Morrow County Health District is the designated ambulance service provider for all of Morrow County and has been providing these services for over 27 years.

Morrow County Health District has requested that the EMS Advisory Committee enforce the Morrow County Ambulance Service Area Plan with respect to how Boardman Fire Rescue District is dispatched. Currently, BFRD is engaging in a practice known as call jumping, where multiple providers respond to a single incident. In Oregon, call jumping is illegal. The state of Oregon has determined that this practice presents risks to the public and patients that do not outweigh the benefits of that action. These concerns were cited in the Determination order prepared by the EMS Advisory Committee and MCHD in March 2022. Actions taken by MCHD and the EMS Advisory Committee are undertaken for the sole purpose of ensuring emergency resources are efficiently and appropriately regulated in an effort to ensure community safety.

MCHD has made no requests involving Boardman Police Department. Boardman Police Department has never been a party to the ongoing dispatch issues.

MCHD has made many attempts to resolve this issue and develop a partnership with BFRD to enhance EMS services. Those attempts have not been successful. At this point, due to the continued public safety risk, MCHD is following the legal process outlined in the ASA Plan as we constructively work toward a reasonable, community-based resolution.

Boardman Fire Rescue District is very good at what they do, and we are beyond grateful for their firefighting services. MCHD’s EMS first responders are also very skilled at what they do and have been saving lives in our communities for 27 years. Changing the way emergency medical services are deployed in Morrow County does not make sense. Not when there is already a system in place that is safe, effective, efficient and proven to save lives

MCHD appreciates community feedback and inquiries. Questions and comments can be sent to community@mocohd. More information about MCHD’s EMS services is available at <http://www.morrowcountyhealthdistrict.org/emergency-medical-services>