

Wamsley:

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“She is very much missed, and we are carrying her legacy to serve children and families,” he said.

Cathy Wamsley began her career at Umatilla Morrow County Head Start in 1978 and retired as the executive director in 2014 after 36 years. She died Nov. 23, 2021, in Hermiston at the age of 73.

“Besides her dedication, Cathy had a great sense of humor,” Treadwell recalled. “She loved joking around and always said to never forget the small details to achieve success in whatever you do.”

Thomas, Brady and Brooke Wamsley said they were extremely honored to see Cathy receiving such recognition.

“I am overwhelmed. I am so happy to see that she is still remembered,” Thomas Wamsley said.

The new center is one of five in Hermiston.

“We serve children living in poverty, experiencing



Yasser Marte/East Oregonian

Cathy Wamsley's husband Thomas reflects on his wife's dedication to supporting children and families across Eastern Oregon on Thursday, Aug. 25, 2022, at the grand opening of the Cathy Wamsley Early Learning Center at Umatilla-Morrow Head Start in Hermiston.

homelessness, domestic violence and food insecurity. Some of them are foster kids,” explained UMHS Education Director Suellen Whitlock.

The children have dental, vision and health services including mental and behavioral support.

“Dentists come into the classrooms to take care of the kids,” Whitlock said. “The

kids receive nutritious meals (breakfast, lunch and snack). “The food is prepared from scratch in our kitchen.”

The curriculum is focused on creative ways to teach literacy, math and sciences.

“They have incredible early learning opportunities playing through their senses preparing them for kindergarten. We are giving them



Yasser Marte/East Oregonian

Cathy Wamsley's son Brady reflects on his mother's hard work and devotion for education Thursday, Aug. 25, 2022, at the opening of the Cathy Wamsley Early Learning Center at Umatilla-Morrow Head Start in Hermiston.

a head start,” she explained.

The center has 20 people in the staff formed by early learning professionals. One of the lead teachers is Yesenia Castaneda in charge of the preschool for 3-5 years olds.

“These children are receiving the milestones to be a successful student in Kindergarten and K-12,” she said.

When the student is 4

years old the educators of the center work on transition plans out of kindergarten, giving feedback to schools in which areas they are doing well or need improvements.

In coordination with the Hermiston Chamber of Commerce's ceremony, the public was invited after the opening of the center to

enjoy frozen pops and activities hosted by different head start programs and partners. People are invited to donate their favorite children's books for head start classrooms.

Catherine Lee Wamsley of Hermiston was born on Dec. 7, 1947, in Sunnyside, Washington. She grew up in Spokane and graduated from Shadle Park High School. She attended Washington State University, where she completed her bachelor's degree in elementary education. She later attended Eastern Oregon University, where she completed her master's degree. In the early 1970s she began her career as a teacher in Connell, Washington, teaching the fifth grade. In 1977 she moved back to Spokane for a short time before settling in Hermiston in 1978.

“Cathy knew the needs of the community deeply and always kept in touch with them,” Whitlock said. “She knew UMHS inside out and planned very strategic opportunities for growth of our services that we are still implementing.”



Capital Press, File

A crop duster sprays a potato field with fungicide. Farm advocates claim Oregon regulators have created an online data tool that exaggerates pesticide levels in waterways.

Pesticide:

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Rather, the online tool fails to explain that data was collected at highly targeted locations and times when pesticides were more likely to be detected, said Katie Murray, executive director of Oregonians for Food and Shelter.

“This is a very biased data set — intentionally biased,” Murray said.

The data was gathered as part of the state's Pesticide Stewardship Partnership, which was formed by DEQ, ODA and other agencies in 2000 to support voluntary improvements to pesticide practices.

By taking samples immediately downstream from farms after spring rains, for example, the program seeks to maximize detections, according to industry groups. Pesticide users can then see if their strategies to keep chemicals out of waterways are proving effective.

To monitor for pesticides on a watershed-scale, however, samples would need to be taken at random sites and times, with the data likely reflecting less frequent pesticide detections at lower concentrations, they said. Without these caveats, though, the government's online data viewer creates an exaggerated impression of pesticide levels and health risks.

“That's not what that data meant. It's telling the wrong story,” Murray said. “DEQ is actively presenting this data as if we can generalize from it about the safety of the water and we cannot. They're encouraging people to misunderstand this data.”

A stakeholder advisory committee raised concerns about such misperceptions, which government officials seem to have ignored, critics say. The Pesticide Stewardship Partnership relies on cooperation from farmers and other pesticide users, but the online tool threatens to undermine that trust.

“Nobody knew that is

how they'd use the data 10 to 20 years down the road,” Murray said.

The Pesticide Stewardship Partnership's data-driven education has been more effective at reducing water pesticide levels than standard regulatory approaches, Cooper said. In recent years, however, the program hasn't engaged as closely with individual farmers.

Now, the data viewer will likely serve as a cudgel in legislative disputes over pesticides, particularly since it implies “even the agencies acknowledge this is a problem” with waterway pollution, she said.

“You're just going to inflame situations,” Cooper said. “It makes it hard to see how they will explain the full picture to lawmakers and the public.”

When asked about these concerns, the DEQ said the tool provides “additional context” for the “current and historic monitoring data,” such as federal benchmarks for protecting “the health of aquatic life and humans.”

“To aid the public's understanding of the data, and to address concerns that the raw data could be misinterpreted or misused, DEQ displays the data in the manner consistent with how DEQ and ODA interpret the data to manage the program,” the agency said in an email.

The ODA said the data tool is “not intended to be a comprehensive source of pesticide distribution in state waters,” but helps pesticide users and other partners achieve “measurable environmental improvements.”

In response to feedback from stakeholders, a “popup” explaining the “context and scope of the data” now appears when the online tool is accessed, the agency said in an email.

The data viewer was developed by DEQ to “provide transparency and easier access” to program data, and the ODA is “committed to working with DEQ to periodically update” the tool, the agency said.

Water:

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At least half the \$17 million for the project is coming from federal and state grants, according to the Westland Irrigation District's website. The balance will be through long-term, low-interest loans with repayment obligated to only those patrons who choose to participate in the project.

Project addresses water infrastructure needs

Westland Irrigation District's water supplies come from early-season, snowmelt water from the Umatilla River and then later-season, stored water from McKay Reservoir, delivered to approximately 14,700 acres, according to the district's website. Water passes through 30 miles of canals and pipelines to more than 260 patrons, with a majority living in the northern reach of the system on smaller acreages.

When stored reservoir water is released for use, the conveyed distance increases by an additional 30 miles to reach those patrons in the district's north end, resulting in lowered delivery efficiency and increased system losses.

Westland, the county and other project partners proposed in late 2021 to modernize existing irrigation infrastructure and build new facilities to increase late season water supply. The project also would provide water for other economic and environmental uses, and permit leaving more in McKay Reservoir, south of



John Tillman/East Oregonian

Even in a wet year, McKay Reservoir near Pendleton is low Wednesday, Aug. 25, 2022. It provides late season water for the Stanfield and Westland irrigation districts. The \$17 million Ordinance Regional Water Supply and Aquifer Restoration Project would bring Columbia River water to the Westland Irrigation District, allowing the reservoir to retain supply for other uses.

Pendleton, to support fisheries.

The supply and recharge project includes pressurized pipelines, pump stations and aquifer recharge basins, to improve water delivery and supply reliability to district users, improve conservation and support groundwater recharge. Westland is collaborating with Farmers Conservation Alliance and Umatilla County on the project to bolster water deliveries in the district's north end while providing all users the opportunity to add to their water supplies.

Westland and the county want to run a pipe and pressurize the northern section of its A Canal, Engbretson said. The pipe diameter is planned to be 42-inches and would cross Interstate 84 and tie into another pipe to replace the open canal.

“The water would come from the John Day Pool, below McNary Dam, west of Umatilla,” Engbretson said. “The pipeline would run along the edge of the (Camp Umatilla) depot to a chunk of ground next to the interstate near the gravel pit. The pipeline will spur off, cross the freeway and tie into the ditch. The concrete-lined canal and its three pump stations are to be decommissioned once the district can use Columbia River water.”

Background and further studies

Umatilla County acquired the right from Northeast Oregon Water Association to pump out of the Columbia River in July 2019. The county had been in talks with the Westland Irrigation District for pumping capacity since obtaining that right.

The district was interested in acquiring an option to use a part of that capacity during the irrigation season. The county board approved that option, and agreements to acquire Westland's canal crossing, and to use Umatilla River water through district facilities for recharge testing on the depot.

Engbretson said he foresees another year of work on the watershed plan studies. The district could receive funds at the end of next year. Construction might begin in two to three years.

“We're still going through the watershed plan, making surveys of cultural, environmental and economic impacts,” he said.

And when the plan is complete, he said, Westland can apply for Natural Resources Conservation Service funding as well.

Schools:

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Masking will be optional in the Hermiston, Milton-Freewater, Morrow, Pendleton and Umatilla school districts, with some schools continuing to offer optional masks to their students should they feel a desire to wear one. Neither Milton-Freewater nor Umatilla districts will be offering masks to their students this fall.

“We have a hand-washing emphasis, and support for masks being a personal choice. There is signage that you can see, mask OK, no mask OK ... That's all over the state,” Heidi Sipe, superintendent of the Umatilla School District explained, and in Umatilla schools, staff created the signs. “Having those signs is helpful, we haven't had a lot of problems with kids teasing around masks,” she said.

Morrow County School District also has placed a great emphasis on hand washing, labeling it the “most important action,” in its communicable disease management plan. The district plan also emphasizes a need to limit exposure, explaining that

students who feel ill must stay home. Morrow County School District also purchased air purifiers for every classroom to “support better air ventilation in areas with multiple people present,” according to its plan.

Above all, each school district has expressed their intent to continue thorough cleaning and sanitation of classrooms that began when first combating the pandemic in 2020, with Hermiston School District even hiring an additional custodian at every building last year.

Hermiston School District, Morrow School District as well as the Umatilla School District will continue to offer on-site test kits for parents and students, while Pendleton School District offers at-home test kits on request. Milton-Freewater School District Superintendent Aaron Duff explained that although there will be no testing at Milton-Freewater schools, there is a clinic in town that offers testing.

Students will be returning to classrooms for their first day of classes in the Hermiston School District on Aug. 29 and in the Pendleton School District on Aug. 31.



Kathy Aney/East Oregonian, File

A sign at McNary Heights Elementary School in Umatilla instructs proper mask use on May 16, 2022. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has issued new pandemic guidelines ahead of the fall term that ease restrictions.

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