

COURT

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Another receives several days of community work service for using her prescription drugs out of turn.

Even after punishment is meted, however, the last words they hear are encouragement. Treatment court ends in about a half-hour, always on a positive note, with many of the program participants leaving with a smile on their faces.

Judge Thomas Powers, a fairly recent addition to the circuit court bench, sees the program as a huge benefit to the legal system and to participants.

Powers said that training includes a nation-wide three-day conference of the National Association of Drug Treatment Court Professionals that includes intensive workshops, skills training and various expert lectures.

Judicial conferences within Oregon generally include a specialty court section that addresses treatment court.

Heather Rutherford, a circuit court employee, also serves as the court's coordinator, a position she held as a fill-in at Union County Circuit Court. She's served in the program since 2012.

She gathers all the information, including that of the participants, and puts it in



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— Judge Thomas Powers

packets for those on the team.

She is also active in the intake process, including compiling personal histories. She also receives weekly reports, which include how a participant's week went, along with urinalysis results. She tracks all the paperwork and keeps it organized.

Both Powers and Rutherford consider the program a success.

"We take a lot of pride in our success rate," Powers said. He added that he looks at success on two levels: The number of people who enter the program and graduate and how those graduates fare after they leave the program.

"If you successfully complete the program and graduate, there's an assumption that you've got the support network and tools and skills, to be successful outside of the program," he said.

Powers said he enjoys seeing the positive changes many participants make after coming to the program either fresh out of detox or still strung out.

"Eighteen months later, they're clean and sober, they have a GED and stable employment," he said.

He noted the program helps participants with wraparound services that assist with housing, child-care and other amenities, as do the peer support groups.

"People who come in are often here because the only peer group they have are other users or dealers," he said. "For many, it's the first time in years they've been surrounded by people who want to support their sobriety rather than enable it, and that makes a huge difference."

Rutherford agrees. "I think it's very much a success," she said. "I think a

lot of the graduates remain successful, and I think it's great when they can show their family and kids a clean and sober self, and that's huge."

Like the DA's office, both Rutherford and Powers said that their favorite thing about the program is seeing people succeed.

"I have a soft spot for — whether it's a male or female participant — those who have kids," Powers said. "To hear the stories of them being able to be sober parents to their kids."

Rutherford added she enjoys children finding a new definition of normal in their lives.

The judge said that the only changes he'd like to see in the program are a defense attorney for those participants who admit to extra-legal activities. Housing is also a concern.

"This program makes a lot of demands on people," Powers said. "They go to NA and AA meetings, individual and group therapy sessions, behavioral modification classes, jobs, community service and the treatment court itself. You need the stable platform of a place to live to pull that off."

"If anyone thinks this is a loosey-goosey kind of program, they need to understand that it gets the results that benefit everyone. There's a big benefit to the community in the end-product," he added.

IN BRIEF

Hunters group plans fundraiser

The drawing for a coveted guided bull elk hunt on The Nature Conservancy's Zumwalt Prairie Preserve will highlight the Union/Wallowa Chapter of the Oregon Hunters Association's annual fundraiser banquet March 17 at the Blue Mountain Conference Center in La Grande.

Ticket packages for adult singles and groups range from \$40 to \$1,500. Youth packages, which include dinner, tickets for youth raffles and a free gift, are sold for \$20.

Funds raised at the banquet are dedicated to local wildlife habitat conservation projects and youth activities that the chapter sponsors each year. Tickets must be purchased by March 12 or until the banquet limit of 300 is reached.

Purchase ticket packages by filling out a banquet form or by calling Jed Farmer at (541) 562-6267 or Morgan Olsen at (541) 786-1283.

Library fairs on the schedule

Libraries across Wallowa County will be celebrating with Library Fairs in coming weeks.

Fun activities for children, free food and free chil-

dren's book. Learn how to use the SAGE Catalog, receive a free library card and use the Internet.

Celebrations are planned on the following days and times:

- Enterprise Public Library, 3-7 p.m. Friday, March 9
- Troy Branch Library, 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. Saturday, March 10
- Joseph Public Library, 2-6 p.m. Friday, March 16
- Wallowa County Library in Enterprise, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Friday, April 6
- Wallowa Public Library in Wallowa, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., Saturday, April 7

EOU Oregon's rural university

Legislation has been approved by the Oregon State Senate and House designating Eastern Oregon University as Oregon's Rural University.

"Eastern Oregon University has been serving rural Oregon since its founding in 1929," said Sen. Bill Hansell, who represents Wallowa County. "Giving EOU this official designation will allow the university to appeal to potential students across the nation and leverage federal funds."

EOU reports that a statutory designation as a rural-serving institution will assist it in accessing certain federal grants. EOU is located in La Grande. The legislation travels next to the governor for his signature.

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