

Polk County
Itemizer-Observer

Volume 140, Issue 6

www.Polkio.com

February 11, 2015

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Tax scam artists at work in local area

By Emily Mentzer
The Itemizer-Observer

POLK COUNTY — Don't panic. That call you just got from someone claiming to be from the Internal Revenue Service is not from the IRS — it's a scam.

You're not going to be arrested. Do not give the caller your information or any money. Just hang up.

This scam, which several Polk County residents have reported recently, can be particularly scary, said Ellen Klem, director of consumer outreach and education for the Office of the Attorney General.

"It's horrific," Klem said. "Who isn't afraid of the IRS? Even if you know you don't owe any money."

The IRS will never call someone to demand immediate payment, nor about taxes owed without first having mailed a bill, according to www.irs.gov.

If you're concerned you may be in trouble with the IRS, go online to the agency's website or call the IRS at 1-800-829-1040. Do not ask the caller — who is part of a scam — what number to call.

The scammer will give his or her number rather than the phone number to the IRS.

"They say, 'Here's our phone number,' and magically, they answer the phone and say, 'This is the IRS,'" Klem said.

If you have been a victim of this scam and have lost money, a complaint may be filed with the Oregon Department of Justice at www.oregonconsumer.org.

Another IRS-related fraud happening now is through third-party tax filing software, such as Turbo Tax.

"It's basically tax refund identity theft," said Bob Estabrook, public information officer for the Oregon Department of Revenue.

What's happening is someone — a fraudster — has enough information about you to file a tax return on your behalf and receive your refund in his or her bank account.

"When taxpayers go to file their own return, you get a notice saying you've already filed," Estabrook said. "Of course the taxpayer knows they haven't filed before."

Taxpayers can protect themselves by reporting any possible identity theft and filing their returns as quickly as possible.

Ideally, the first tax return someone files should be the authentic one, Estabrook said.

For more information or to report being a victim: www.oregon.gov/dor, call 503-378-4988 or 1-800-356-4222.



EMILY MENTZER/Itemizer-Observer

Marshall Guthrie leans on bicycle racks that he helped get installed — he even gave tips to the welder on design — on Western Oregon University's campus.

MONMOUTH'S MAN OF MANY HATS

Marshall Guthrie has gotten involved, is making a difference in the community, on WOU campus

By Emily Mentzer
The Itemizer-Observer

MONMOUTH — Marshall Guthrie rides his bike everywhere.

He enjoys taking loops around country roads, stopping in at Rogue Hop Farms for a craft beer — at least when he has time in between his work as director of Western Oregon's Student Enrichment Program and attending seemingly endless meetings as a Monmouth city councilman.

Long rides in the country also take a backseat to him helping define WOU's future as a member of the institution's first independent governing board.

In just 12 months, Guthrie has gone from a moderately involved citizen of Monmouth to having his hands in a little bit of everything in town.

"I've officially said my plate's full, unless it's replacing something or it's something I have a personal passion for," he said.

For Guthrie, 35, community involvement started by moving to Monmouth five years ago from New York, just outside of New York City.

Meet Marshall



Name: Marshall Guthrie.
Hometown: Monmouth.
Employment: Western Oregon University TRIO program, Student Enrichment Program.

Age: 35.
Family: Megan Habermann, partner for 10 years.

Origins: He is from Iowa, but his ancestors are from Scotland. One of his ancestors allegedly gutted three fish, so his name is Guthrie, sounding like "gut three."

Favorite pastime: Bike riding — also his main form of transportation — closely followed by a love for movies and music.

Did you know? Marshall and Megan have no children or pets, but once upon a time they had three sibling kittens in their care. They were foster parents for strays while living on the East Coast, and these little kittens made such an impression, their photo remains on the couple's refrigerator.

It was the first time he had lived in the same community he worked in, and it gave him a sense of ownership.

Back East, Guthrie worked a stressful job with long, odd hours. When he got to Monmouth, he was unemployed. Even after he got his job at WOU, he felt bored.

"It's close to an 8-to-5 job," he said. "I had too much free time on my hands. I was like, 'All right, let's see what would happen if I actually try and

get involved."

A chance meeting with Cec Koontz, a Monmouth community leader, at Crush Wine Bar in downtown Monmouth led to Guthrie's participation in the Ford Institute Leadership Program.

"From there, it spiraled out of control," Guthrie said. His first appointment to a government committee was to work on the city of Monmouth budget.

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IN YOUR TOWN

DALLAS NEWS

OK, longtime Dallas residents. Ready for a blast from the past?

Remember the name Dandy Burger? It's back, now operated by original owner Bill Pettit's son, Otis Pettit.

The first Dandy Burger was only open from 1982 to 1987 before the Pettit family sold the drive-thru-only restaurant. It closed shortly after, but those first five years made an impression on Dallas. Pettit said since he's been open, he's seen a stream of familiar faces come through his new location off Monmouth Cutoff Road in Dallas.

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FALLS CITY NEWS

More than a year after the first code violation citation was issued at Akha Farm in Falls City, the city and farm will be back in court this spring for an appeal hearing.

Akha Farm owner Matthew McDaniel is appealing code violations he was convicted of last fall. The appeal is scheduled for a pretrial conference April 2 and a trial on April 29 in Polk County Circuit Court.

McDaniel was found guilty in Falls City Municipal Court on seven code violations from six citations issued from March 18, 2014, to June 18, 2014.

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INDEPENDENCE NEWS

When a parent decides their student does not need to or should not take a state-mandated test, it is considered an automatic "does not meet" standards.

Central School District Superintendent Buzz Brazeau addressed the school board at its Feb. 2 meeting about the topic, including informing board members that the district will be adopting policy on how to handle parents who opt-out of tests.

"There is potential for a parent to opt out based on one of two reasons: religious purposes or disability," Brazeau said.

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MONMOUTH NEWS

One thing Louisiana native Rebecca Chiles is sure of: Southern hospitality is not just in the south.

"I've been welcomed more warmly in this town and on this campus than I've been welcomed anywhere else," she said. "It's not a Southern hospitality thing; it's a people thing."

Chiles, 45, took the job of Western Oregon University's director of campus public safety on Feb. 2, making the move from Shreveport, La., to Monmouth.

She said it hasn't been a huge culture shock, noting that Monmouth's as-yet mild winter has been a nice change from Louisiana's typically extreme weather.

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POLK COUNTY NEWS

Children whose records on file show missing immunizations will not be able to attend school or child care starting Feb. 18, the state's school exclusion day.

State law requires that all children in public and private schools, preschools, Head Start and certified child care facilities have up-to-date documentation on their immunizations or have an exemption, according to the Oregon Immunization Program.

"Immunization is an effective way to keep schools and the entire community healthy," said Stacy de Assis Matthews, school law coordinator in the Oregon Health Authority Public Health Division.

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THE NEXT 7 DAYS PLANNING FOR YOUR WEEK

<p>wed</p> <p>It's rivalry night on the basketball court, as Dallas plays host to Central in a Mid-Willamette Conference girls game. 7 p.m. \$5.</p> <p>Fog; Mostly Cloudy Hi: 56 Lo: 42</p>	<p>thu</p> <p>Ash Creek Arts Center is hosting an artist reception for its current exhibit at MaMere's Bed & Breakfast in Monmouth. 5-7 p.m. Free.</p> <p>Fog; Partly Sunny Hi: 59 Lo: 43</p>	<p>fri</p> <p>Dance the night away to music from the 1940s, 50s and 60s at the Sweet-heart Dance at the Dallas Civic Center. 7-10 p.m. \$5.</p> <p>Fog; Partly Sunny Hi: 59 Lo: 43</p>	<p>sat</p> <p>It's closing night for the Central High School theater department's winter play production of "Oklahoma!" 6:30 p.m. \$5-\$8.</p> <p>Fog; Partly Sunny Hi: 56 Lo: 43</p>	<p>sun</p> <p>Receive vocal lessons during the weekly "From the Heart Community Sing" at St. Thomas Episcopal Church. 1:30 p.m. Free.</p> <p>Mostly Sunny Hi: 56 Lo: 39</p>	<p>mon</p> <p>Don't forget that it's the President's Day holiday. Schools, as well as city, county, state and federal government offices, will be closed.</p> <p>Mostly Sunny Hi: 55 Lo: 39</p>	<p>tue</p> <p>Have some coins that need appraising? Visit the Polk County Coin Club meeting at the Monmouth Senior Center. 7 p.m. Free.</p> <p>Partly Sunny Hi: 54 Lo: 38</p>
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