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JOLENE GUZMAN/Itemizer-Observer

Detective sergeant Mark Garton takes the office of sheriff Dec. 1 as interim after Sheriff Bob Wolfe steps down at the end of November.

Familiar face, new job

By Jolene Guzman
The Itemizer-Observer

POLK COUNTY — Mark Garton made it his goal to become sheriff several years ago.

Wednesday, that objective — at least temporarily — was fulfilled when the Polk County Board of Commissioners appointed him to serve as interim sheriff for 13 months starting in December.

In his 18 years with the sheriff's office, Garton has served many roles, from cadet to jail deputy to detective sergeant.

He's spent the last six or

seven years learning from Sheriff Bob Wolfe, who has held the post for 16 years.

"This is what I've wanted to do," Garton said.

He's also running to hold the job permanently, as is Yamhill County Sheriff's Office Patrol Sgt. Todd Whitlow, who applied for the interim job, as well.

They are the only two candidates who have filed for the office in the May 2016 primary so far. The deadline for candidates to file is March 8, 2016.

Polk County Commissioner Mike Ainsworth said he was impressed with both candidates, saying Whitlow

is more than qualified for the job.

His decision for the interim post hinged on creating a smooth transition after Wolfe retires and he and the board thought Garton was the best man for that job.

"I think probably more than anything, it was the continuity," Ainsworth said. "Mark has an understanding of the department."

Garton said his objective once he takes over is continuing to rebuild the office with money provided through a tax levy passed in May. Top priorities are

restoring 24-hour patrol and the Polk Interagency Narcotics Team (POINT).

He said, no matter who voters choose next year, it will be his responsibility to have the office ready for a newly elected sheriff.

"That's my job for the next 13 months," he said. "That is what I will focus on."

Garton said the office is ahead of schedule in restoring full patrol hours because of a number of "lateral," hires, or officers already working in other departments.

"We got lucky hiring certified police officers," he said. "Certified officers don't

have to go through officer training with the Department of Public Safety Standards and Training, a process that takes four months, making the transition to the field quicker.

If field training of new officers goes as planned, full patrol hours could be restored by this summer, a little more than a year after the levy passed.

Getting POINT running again will take longer, as the department wants to make sure it's hiring the right officers for the job.

"We don't want to compromise our standards," Garton said.

IN YOUR TOWN

DALLAS

Realtors hope properties are priced to sell at auction.

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FALLS CITY

Falls City School District lists needs, wants for proposed gym.

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INDEPENDENCE

Water, sewer rates to go up.

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MONMOUTH

Lock up your bike to deter potential thieves from targeting your bike.

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SPORTS

Perrydale's volleyball team advances to the quarterfinals of the 1A state volleyball tournament.

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EDUCATION

Central teachers, district approve three-year contract.

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Helicopter crashes while harvesting trees

SHERIDAN — A helicopter harvesting Christmas trees on a farm near Sheridan crashed Monday afternoon.

Witnesses on the scene reported indication of some sort of engine failure causing the pilot, later identified as Blane Hayes of Applebee Aviation, to lose control of the aircraft, according to police reports.

The helicopter spun around as it descended to the ground coming to crashing after damaging the rear tail section of the aircraft as well as the landing skids, according to the Polk County Sheriff's Office.

Hayes was uninjured in the accident and refused any medical assistance, according to police.

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Polk County avoids localized flooding

By Emily Mentzer
The Itemizer-Observer

POLK COUNTY — Saturday's storm that dumped 1.85 inches of rain was a "pretty textbook atmospheric river event," said meteorologist Jeremiah Pyle, with the U.S. National Weather Service in Portland.

"Pineapple Express" is the term commonly used, but we're trying to get away from that term because it's not always Hawaii" that brings the sub-tropical moisture to the Willamette Valley, Pyle said.

Instead, it was a mixture of a low pressure system to the northwest with a frontal boundary extending south of the low that tapped in some sub-tropical moisture.

The storm was typical for Oregon, Pyle noted, and we'll likely see a few more this winter.

"We don't have any on the short-term horizon, but it's likely that we'll see more of those types of events later on this winter," he said.

The storm caused little localized flooding throughout Polk County. The combination of heavy rain between 5 and 8 p.m. and fall leaves meant storm drains became covered with leaves and debris.

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JOLENE GUZMAN/Itemizer-Observer

A storm on Saturday dumped 1.85 inches of rain on Polk County. The storms caused little localized flooding throughout the county.

THE NEXT 7 DAYS PLANNING FOR YOUR WEEK	wed	thu	fri	sat	sun	mon	tue
	 Grab your thinking caps and head to Independence library for an afternoon of fun and Scrabble with Betty. 1 p.m. Free.	 James2 Community Kitchen offers free meals for all who are hungry at Dallas United Methodist each Thursday. 4:30-6 p.m. Free.	 Have a luau-inspired dinner and play casino-style games at a fundraiser for PCL at Eola Hills winery. 6 p.m. \$20.	 Polk Community Free Clinic provides medical and mental health services for folks who can't afford health care. 7-11 a.m. Free.	 The Buell Grange will host its monthly breakfast of all-you-care-to-eat pancakes, eggs, hash browns and more. 8-11 a.m. \$6.	 Drop off new or gently used coats, blankets, scarves, hats and gloves to Windermere Real Estate in Monmouth. 9 a.m.-5 p.m. Free.	 Happy Birthday U.S. Marine Corps! All marines and their families are invited to a birthday party at Murphy's Grill. 6 p.m. Free.
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