



**HOT HOOPS**

Tigers corral Mustangs, GU cages Imbler — **PAGE B1**

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# Parole panel reviews brutal cop-killing

Sidney Dean Porter argues for his release

By **Scotta Callister**  
Blue Mountain Eagle

CANYON CITY — After a hearing last week in Salem, Grant County District Attorney Jim Carpenter is cautiously optimistic that convicted cop-killer Sidney Dean Porter will stay in prison at least



**Officer Frank Ward**

a few more years.

The Oregon Board of Parole and Post-Prison Supervision is expected to issue its decision soon.

Porter, 55, has been in prison for 23 years for the April 1992 bludgeoning death of John Day Police Officer Frank Ward.

The Jan. 27 hearing before a



**Sidney Dean Porter**

panel of parole board members was Porter's second bid for freedom. In 2013, the board set a release date for that summer but, after a public uproar across the state, revisited the issue and decided to hold him for two more years.

This time, the board can decide to release Porter as soon

as this summer or extend his incarceration another two to 10 years.

Carpenter said the board members were attentive throughout the daylong hearing, and questioned Porter for nearly three hours on details from his testimony.

Porter recounted his version of the events that night, when he was drinking with friends and got into an alcohol-fueled fight with his wife. A neighbor called police to report a domestic disturbance

and Ward was dispatched.

Porter contends he didn't recognize Ward was a police officer, and that he fought with Ward out of fear for his life and his family.

Carpenter noted the evidence showed that Ward was in uniform when he went to the Porter home and that he repeatedly identified himself as a police officer — at one point, loud enough that a neighbor across the road heard him clearly.

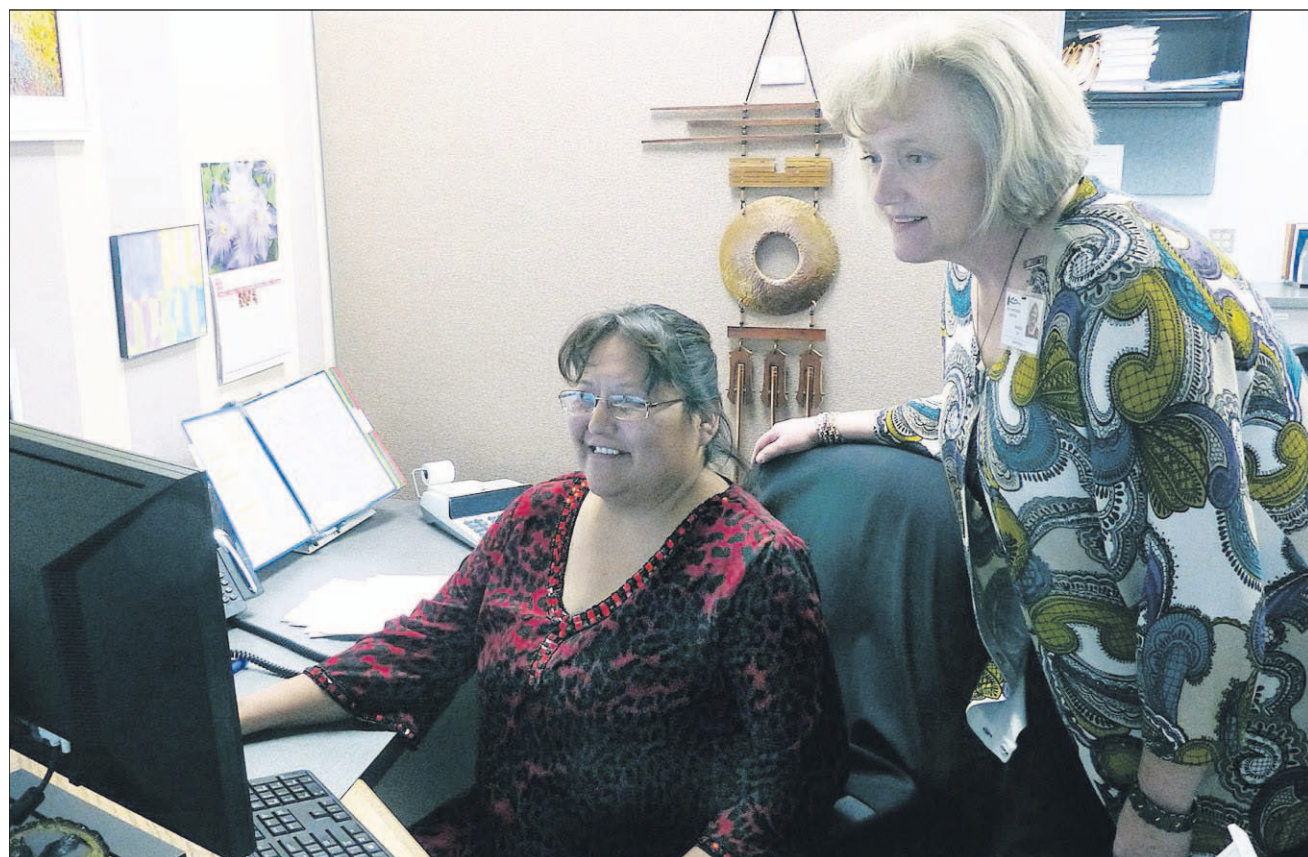
Ward, hearing a woman's screams, entered the home

and the two men scuffled. Porter says Ward repeatedly pepper-sprayed him; they fell against the wood stove and some firewood, the officer fatally breaking his neck.

Carpenter said the panel noted changes in his story from the previous hearing — including the assertion about a broken neck — and questioned him carefully. He also scoffed at the idea of Porter as family protector.

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# TEMP CEO MAKING ROUNDS AT HOSPITAL



The Eagle/Scotta Callister

Margie Molitor, with Tina Shorts (left) at the reception desk, is getting to know the staff in her duties as interim CEO at Blue Mountain Hospital.

**STUDENT ART**



**Mary Woodbury**  
Prairie City School  
Teacher: Becky Sharp

## Molitor's on the job at least through spring

By **Scotta Callister**  
Blue Mountain Eagle

JOHN DAY — The remoteness. The small towns. The scenic mountains. The dry climate. Coming from Wyoming, Margie Molitor found plenty to make her feel at home in John Day — even temporarily.

Molitor is the interim CEO at Blue Mountain Hospital. She began her duties in mid-January, succeeding Bob Houser, who retired after 15 years with the district.

Molitor was brought in by HealthTech Management Services, which contracts with

the hospital district. She expects to be on the job through the recruitment process for a new permanent CEO.

"I'm excited to be here," she said. "We've got people here who really want to do a good job for the community."

In her first two weeks, Molitor began meeting with staff and putting names to faces for as many of the hospital's 187 employees as she could. She attended her first board of directors meeting, and is getting to know the different departments and their needs.

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## It's Phase II for Eastern Oregon wolves, ranchers

Biologists count seven breeding pairs in 2014

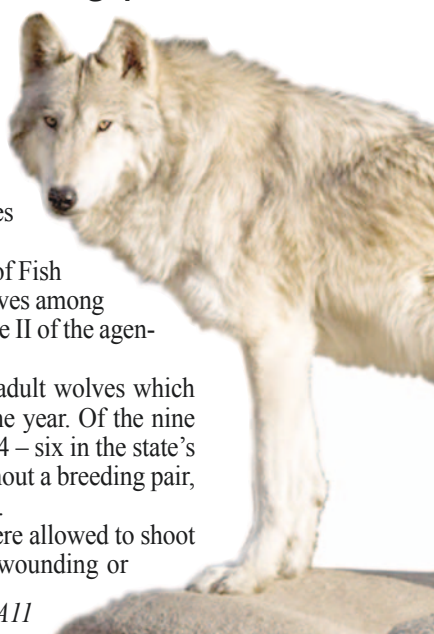
By **George Plaven**  
EO Media Group

Eastern Oregon's wolf population reached a key milestone in 2014 that not only gives ranchers more leeway to protect their livestock, but could lead to removing the predators from the state Endangered Species List entirely.

For the third year in a row, the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife counted at least four breeding pairs of wolves among packs east of Highways 395, 78 and 95, triggering Phase II of the agency's Wolf Management and Conservation Plan.

A breeding pair is defined by ODFW as a pair of adult wolves which produce at least two pups that survive to the end of the year. Of the nine wolf packs in Oregon, seven had breeding pairs in 2014 — six in the state's northeast corner. Only the Imnaha pack was found without a breeding pair, and the Umatilla River pack has not yet been surveyed.

Under Phase I of the management plan, ranchers were allowed to shoot wolves only if they were caught in the act of biting, wounding or



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## Wildfire work wins national award for Jerome

Advocate for fire awareness gains 2015 honor

By **Scotta Callister**  
Blue Mountain Eagle



**Irene Jerome**

Irene Jerome, an independent forestry consultant in Grant County, has been selected to receive a national 2015 Wildfire Mitigation Award.

She is one of 21 individuals or organizations across the nation selected to receive the awards, and one of just nine in her category, wildfire mitigation innovation. She is the only honoree from Oregon.

Jerome is being recognized for her work for Grant County to update its Community Wildfire Protection Plan, and her recent success in organizing the first Firewise Community in Eastern Oregon, in the Pine Creek area of John Day.

The award program lauded her efforts to connect residents of the Wildland-Urban Interface — where residences and manmade improvements intermingle with forest lands — to raise awareness of fire protection strategies and issues.

"Like many rural areas nationwide, there are parts of Grant County that have been getting more developed outside of traditional town boundaries," said Roy Walk-

er, Malheur National Forest fire staff officer, in the nomination. "Irene has given tremendous energy to raising awareness

and helping our residents and responders work together to mitigate the risks of living in the WUI."

Jerome said she feels honored to receive such recognition and thanked her "friends and partners at the Malheur National Forest." Walker and Dana Skelly, fire specialist, who proposed her for the honor.

Officials of the Malheur National Forest, Grant County Court and Oregon Department of Forestry supported her nomination.

The awards were established in 2014 in response to the large number of positive wildfire preparation programs in progress.

The 2015 awards will be presented at the International Association of Fire Chiefs Wildland Urban Interface Conference on March 25 in Reno.

The Wildfire Mitigation Awards are sponsored by that association, the National Association of State Foresters, the National Fire Protection Association and the U.S. Forest Service.

## Grant County denies discrimination in hiring talk

Federal lawsuit is one of two facing the county

By **Scotta Callister**  
Blue Mountain Eagle

PENDLETON — For the second time in three months, attorneys for Grant County have denied claims of discrimination arising from a Dec. 9, 2013, hiring meeting.

The latest filing was last Friday in U.S. District Court in Pendleton, responding to a lawsuit by Terry Hanson, who was a job applicant discussed in the hiring meeting. Hers is one of two federal lawsuits against the county stemming from that meeting.

In Friday's filing, attorneys Karen M. Vickers and Blake H. Fry of the Portland firm Mersereau Shannon LLP contend that Grant County and Dean Hoodenpyl, director of the county's community corrections department, acted in good faith and believed their

actions were not against the law.

The response says Hanson's lawsuit fails to allege facts sufficient to constitute a claim against the defendants, and says both the county and Hoodenpyl qualify for immunity under state law.

The response consists of terse denials of most of the allegations in the Hanson lawsuit.

The filing admits Hanson applied for the county's community service supervisor job, met the minimum requirements for the job, and was not interviewed or hired.

However, the two sides remained at odds as to what happened at the hiring discussion held by Hoodenpyl and members of his staff.

Hanson's lawsuit contends case aide Roni Hickerson and juvenile counselor Cindy Tirioco "made derogatory and discriminatory statements" about Hanson's sex and sexual orientation. The lawsuit cites the

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