

ISSUES

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Grant County Commissioners Boyd Britton and Chris Labhart also promised a thorough airing of any agreement proposed for the county.

Myers said he expects the next step to be a discussion soon with officials in Pendleton to see what an agreement might look like. Any document resulting from such talks would be reviewed by the county’s attorney and discussed with the public, he said.

The Baker County Press has reported that commissioners there recently decided not to sign a cooperator agreement.

Access activists are pushing for “coordination” instead, seeing it as the avenue that gives counties equal standing in resolving conflicts. They say

cooperator status puts the lead agency in charge, with no assurance the other jurisdictions will have any power in the discussions.

John George of Bates has argued for coordination over co-operation in a flurry of emails to forest and county officials, and through the website for Forest Access for All.

“Working under a cooperating MOU does nothing more than assist the Forest Service to check a box and say they met the burden of reviewing your input,” he told that group.

He has urged the individual counties to press their own needs.

“I believe the counties must sit as Coordinating agencies and see our communities needs aligned in the Forest Plan Revision, and anything short of that is a failure of leadership on the part of the commissioners,” he said.

Contracting workshop offered

Blue Mountain Eagle

JOHN DAY – The Forest Service is offering a free workshop to introduce contractors and businesses to the process for doing business with the government.

The Government Contract Assistance Program will put on the workshop in Pendleton, Baker City, Vale, Burns and John Day on five dates during the week of April 13.

The John Day session will

be from 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. April 17 at the Forest Supervisor’s building, 431 Patterson Bridge Road.


The session will give an overview of the agencies, policies for small business set-asides, networking opportunities and more.

Pre-registration is encouraged.

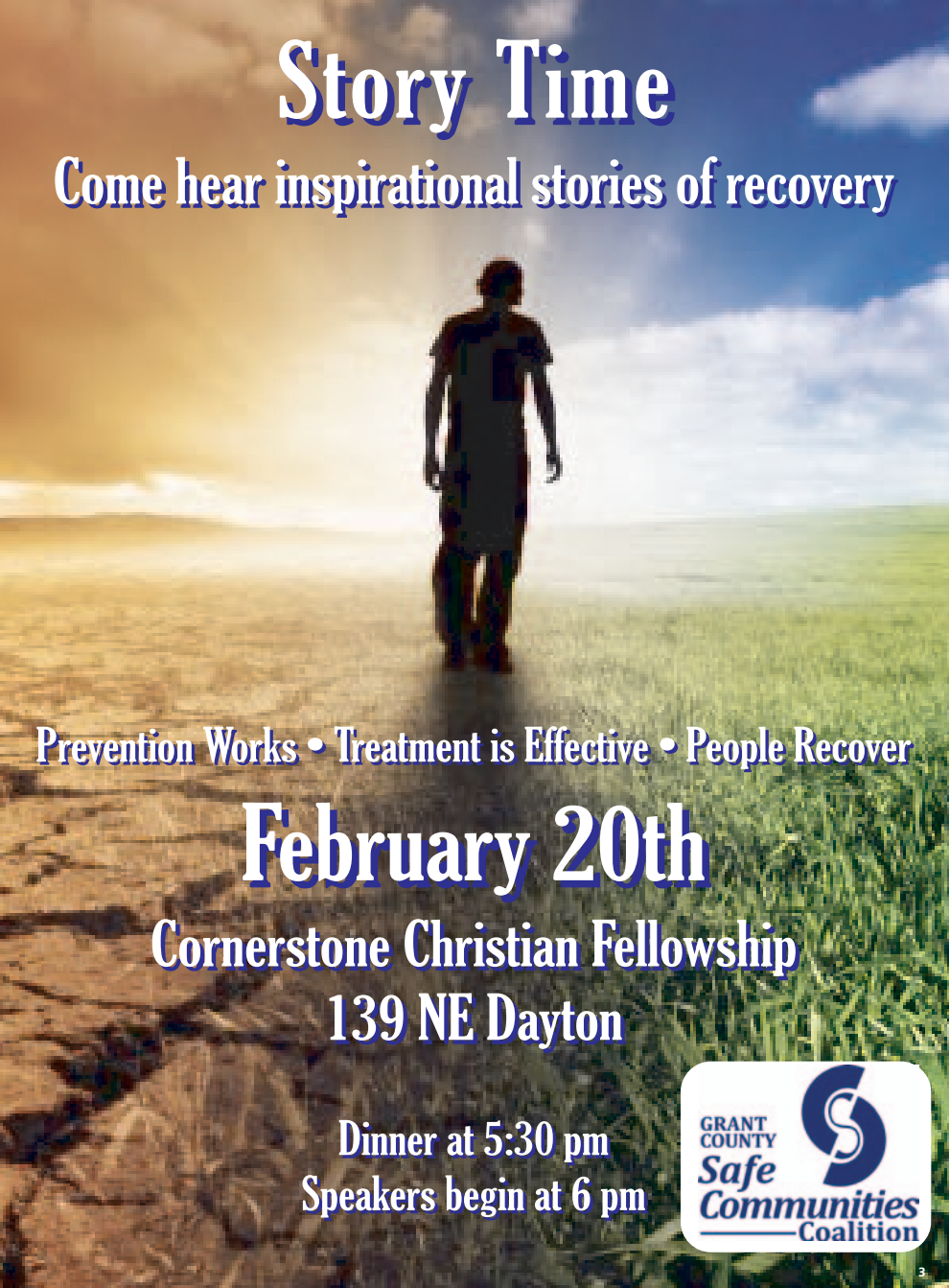
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The Family of Evelyn L. Gates would like to thank everyone who sent cards, flowers and food. The support you have given is greatly appreciated. Also, a very special thanks to Mary Bradley who put on a wonderful dinner in Evelyn’s honor, and to everyone who helped her make it one to remember.




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CAPITAL VISIT



Contributed photo

U.S. Rep. Greg Walden meets with members of the Grant County Safe Community Coalition, who were in Washington, D.C., for the 25th Community Anti-Drug Coalition of America (CADCA) conference. The Grant County delegation included (clockwise from top center) Lisa Weigum of John Day, Russ Comer of Canyon City, Haley Hueckman of John Day and Sheila Comer, Canyon City.

PORTER

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Porter was convicted of aggravated murder in the killing, which occurred after Ward was called to a domestic disturbance at Porter’s home. Evidence from the case indicated that a drunken Porter fought with Ward, striking him on the head with a chunk of firewood.

Porter has since contended he didn’t know the uniformed man was a police officer and that Ward died because he fell against a fireplace and stack of wood.

Among the key factors cited by the parole board:

- Porter fails to grasp the circumstances of his crime and recognize the severity of his history of domestic violence. The board noted his insistence that he was protecting his family on the night he killed Ward, portraying himself as someone who used violence to protect others. While he didn’t remember some things questioned by the board, he had “detailed stories of certain incidents wherein he was acting in what he perceived

to be a noble role.”

“This portrayal is contrary to the record, which shows repeated acts of aggression and assaultive conduct,” the board said.

- Faced with considerable information about the incident and brutal injuries suffered by Ward, Porter minimizes the incident and continues to insist that the officer was the aggressor.

The board also noted a prior crime where Porter asserted his wife’s “hysteria” caused him to “slap” her, a characterization that suggests “the narrow reach of his remorse for his acts of domestic violence and his lack of empathy for his victim.”

- The board remains concerned Porter showed poor planning and foresight for his parole, when he said he would move to a family ranch in the Monument. The ruling said his plan to “live and work in a remote area does not account for the high level of supervision and support he will require in any transition.”

“He has not yet developed a sufficient relapse prevention plan, and his presentation demonstrated an overconfidence regarding the high risk of return to alcohol abuse,” the board said.

The panel also was unconvinced that Porter was thinking beyond “alcohol issues” to deal with domestic violence and anger issues.

The board said Porter needs to “expand his efforts for growth” in all those areas.

Porter was represented at the hearing by his attorney, Andy Simrin, and several relatives and friends were on hand.

Carpenter and Ward’s widow and brother also spoke to the panel.

The hearing also drew law enforcement officials from across the state, including John Day Police Chief Richard Gray and representatives of departments in La Grande, Troutdale, Baker City, and Crook County.

Ward’s widow pleaded with the parole panel to extend Porter’s stay longer than two years – the period since the last release review hearing.

Carpenter said he was encouraged by the board’s decision to keep Porter in prison and to opt for a longer extension than two years.

“At some point in time, it is likely that Mr. Porter will be granted parole,” he said.

However, Carpenter said a review of the nature of the crime, the impact on victims, the psychological evaluations and Porter’s own statements made it clear he needed additional time “to meet the demands of justice and to accomplish the objectives set for him by the Board of Parole in 2013.”

FIRE

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Wendel argued the law requires him to sign the indictment, but doesn’t specify the timing. He also said the statute of limitations is running out on one count in the indictment, making it important to take action.

Cramer cautioned that the situation could set up an issue for the appellate court. However, he decided to proceed with the arraignment.

The indictment includes two counts of aggravated first-degree theft – one alleging theft of cash with a total value of \$10,000 or more, and the other alleging theft of vehicles and property with a value of \$50,000 or more.

The indictment also lists one count of first-degree theft, one count of unauthorized use of a vehicle, one count of possession of a stolen motor vehicle, and five counts of making a false statement in a title application.

Wendel asked the court to set bail at \$20,000 and order Peterson to have no contact with former board members of the Monument Rural Fire Protection District. The state contends Peterson was heard saying if he had to go to jail in the case, he would shoot three of the men.

Hostetter rebutted the threat allegation, challenging the state’s reference to an unnamed witness and the claim of Peterson’s supposed prowess with a .50 caliber.

“Mr. Peterson has never owned a .50 caliber,” Hostetter said.

Cramer opted to release Peterson on a standard conditional release, along with a no-contact order for the board members and witnesses, calling that “typical” in such cases.

Cramer scheduled a session Thursday, Feb. 19, to hear arguments on the demurrer.

The case stems from an investigation by the Oregon State Police and Oregon Department of Justice that began in May 2013. Police served a search warrant in October 2013 at property in the Monument area and seized fire vehicles and evidence for the case, but released no other information prior to the indictment.

For about a decade, Peterson was a vocal advocate for establishing a rural fire protection district in the Monument area. He was chief of Monument’s city department for a time, and also acted as chief of a rural district that was yet to be formalized.

After the district was formed by voters in 2012, the newly installed board and Peterson differed on its management and operation. Noting challenges over meeting procedures, operations, equipment, and leadership, the directors resigned en masse in December 2012.

With the county’s help, the board was re-established. In 2013, Peterson filed notice that he intended to sue the board and its appointed chief, contending the directors conducted a campaign of retaliation against him because of the fire equipment he had obtained over the years.

Last October, the board resigned and asked the County Court to dissolve the district, a process that’s under way now. Their reasons included a lack of volunteers as well the status of fire equipment that was sidelined at Oregon Department of Forestry lot in John Day because of the investigation.



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