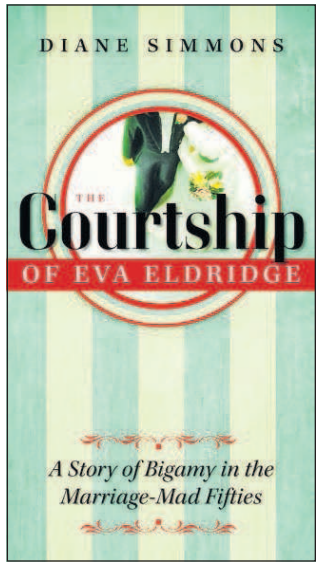


# Diane Simmons shares Huntington woman's story



Author to read from "The Courtship of Eva Eldridge" Jan. 17

Blue Mountain Eagle

Award-winning author Diane Simmons kicks off Eastern Oregon University's 2017 Carl and Sandra Ellston Ars Poetica Literary Lecture Series Tuesday, Jan. 17.

Simmons will share selections from her new book, "The Courtship of Eva Eldridge: A Story of Bigamy in the Marriage-Mad Fifties," at 7:30 p.m. in the Pierce Library Reading Room on campus. The reading is free and open to the public.

David Axelrod, Ars Poetica

director and professor of English at EOU, encourages the community to attend to learn more about this true story about a woman from Huntington.

"If there is one literary event this year that speaks to interest in the history of women in farming communities in rural Eastern Oregon, this reading is for you," Axelrod said.

Simmons' book draws on a trove of some eight hundred letters and papers about Eldridge, who like others of her generation, grew up pretty and popular in rural Oregon and was expected to marry young and live a life much like that of her parents: farming and rearing children. But when the United States entered World War II and men headed to battle, the government started recruiting women to work in their stead.

Eldridge and many other young women found that life in the city with plenty of money, personal freedom, and soldiers and sailors eager to pay court, was more exhilarating than living on the farm. Her remarkable life illuminates women's struggle for happiness at a time when marriage – and the perfect husband – meant everything.

The New Yorker singles out Simmons' narrative of Eldridge's life for tracing "one woman's story through hundreds of wartime letters and papers, ultimately uncovering postwar America's rampant bigamy and the women who overcame it."

Fellow author Peter Chilson praises Simmons, too, stating that her writing "is vivid and tight, with a touch of American noir reminiscent

of Raymond Chandler and Joan Didion. Simmons' writing brings to life the dark side of a country trying to move on in the wake of war. She blends history and her own detective work to tell a story of betrayal and shattered dreams."

Simmons grew up on a farm in southeastern Oregon and completed her undergraduate degree in history from the University of Oregon. She began her writing career as a journalist in Idaho and her first investigative piece involved a ponzi schemer in a mink tie and rattlesnake boots. She has also worked for newspapers in Alaska and Washington, and is the author of two highly regarded novels and an award-winning collection of short-fiction.

Her novel "Dreams Like

Thunder" set on a farm in Eastern Oregon at the end of the frontier, won the Oregon Book Award. Her short stories have appeared in Northwest Review, Missouri Review, Beloit Fiction Journal, Drunken Boat and elsewhere.

Simmons went on to earn a master of arts in creative writing from The City College of New York and a Ph.D. in English literature from the City University of New York Graduate Center. She currently lives in the New York City area and is a professor of English at Borough of Manhattan Community College – City University of New York.

Copies of "The Courtship of Eva Eldridge" will be available to purchase at the reading. Learn more about the author at [dianesimmons.net](http://dianesimmons.net).

# New deputy DA looking forward to building cases

After law school in Chicago, Houck enjoys the trees, mountains

By Rylan Boggs  
Blue Mountain Eagle

Deputy District Attorney Mara Houck has a thing for Legos.

She sees similarities between building a case with pieces of statute and building a structure with tiny bricks. Each piece has to work together.

Trying to support or refute an argument requires using pieces of statute and case law that work, while taking out pieces that won't work and making sure they can be countered, she said.

Houck started Dec. 19 and said it's been a nice change of pace from working in the Multnomah County DA's office, which was regularly inundated with cases.

"It was all hands on deck figuring out what you wanted to do with those cases every morning because the person is sitting in jail overnight and you have to charge them or they get to go," Houck said.

She worked in the Multnomah DA's office while on a school-funded fellowship from Northwestern University in Chicago. She initially dealt with misdemeanors. Once she passed the bar examination, she began handling domestic violence cases, specifically restraining order violations.

The Grant County DA's office handles only a fraction of what Multnomah County's office dealt with, according to Houck. So far she is enjoying the slower pace, but is expecting it to pick up.

"Overall it's a little more relaxed, and I like that because I get to give better attention to the cases," she said.



The Eagle/Rylan Boggs

Deputy District Attorney Mara Houck sits for a photo in her office in the Grant County Courthouse Wednesday, Jan. 4.

Houck has worked in a number of government positions and said she had rarely encountered the stereotype of the "lazy public servant."

"I've worked for a lot of aspects of the public service, and I've always liked it a lot. I feel like the people you encounter and work with are usually really sincere," she said.

Houck grew up in Oregon and graduated from Oregon State University with a degree in environmental engineering. After graduating she went on to work for a civil engineering firm and then the city of Forest Grove's light and power department.

While working there she decided a career change was in order. She chose to study law at Northwestern University in Chicago.

Houck said she enjoyed aspects of living in Chicago, such as the art museums, but wouldn't want to live there again.

"I just didn't fit in there. I was not a city girl. I missed being able to drive around. I missed trees. I missed mountains," she said.

Now, she has neighbors bringing her gravel for her driveway and lending her a roaster to cook Christmas dinner.

She anticipates getting out

and exploring the area.

"I'm hoping that living out here forces me to put into practice my largely theoretical love of the outdoors," she said.

Though she's not fully unpacked yet, Houck is looking forward to settling in. She's a big fan of NASCAR, ice hockey and, of course, Legos. One of her recent projects is a miniature city block she constructed, adding LED lights to brighten up each room on the block.

## MEETING NOTICE UPPER MAINSTEM AND SOUTH FORK JOHN DAY RIVER AGRICULTURAL WATER QUALITY MANAGEMENT AREA PLAN

The Biennial Review of the Upper Mainstem and South Fork John Day River Agricultural Water Quality Management Area Plan will be held January 25, 2017 at 4:00pm at the USDA Conference Room at 721 S. Canyon Blvd., in John Day.

Contact

Jason Kehrberg or Pat Holliday at 541-575-0135 with any questions.

# Local students named to EOU dean's list

Blue Mountain Eagle

Eastern Oregon University named 520 students to the dean's list for the 2016 fall term. Qualifying students achieve and maintain a grade point average of 3.5 or higher

on a 4.0 scale while completing a minimum of 12 hours of graded coursework for the duration of the term.

The following local students earned this distinction: Mariah Meyerholz, Canyon City; Jamie Waltenburg, Day-

ville; Hannah Brandsma, Michael Luttrell and Mikayla Luttrell, John Day; Hannah Flower, Kimberly; Stephanie Croghan and Desiree Kodesh, Mt. Vernon; and Rianon Bauman and Amy Black, Prairie City.

BW	WW	YW	MK	CW	Mrb	RE	PAT	SB
+0	+5B	+9D	+2S	+3B	+5.1	+1.27	+0.33	+133.50

BW	WW	YW	MK	CW	Mrb	RE	PAT	SB
+3.5	+70	+132	+25	+79	+1.34	+0.62	+188.69	