



Analysis of opioid sales by pharmacy skewed against frontier counties

Despite being ranked 89th in U.S., lone Grant County pharmacy distributes fewer pills per county resident than most counties in Oregon

By Richard Hanners
Blue Mountain Eagle



Contributed photo

Greg Armstrong, Len's Drug pharmacist, said recent pharmacy rankings are skewed.

Len's Drug ranked second in the state for popular opioids sold per resident from 2006-2012, but far more of the pain medications were sold per resident in Multnomah County — despite none of its many pharmacies showing up at the top of the rankings.

The pharmacy rankings came after a federal database pinpointing where

76 billion hydrocodone and oxycodone pills were sold in the U.S. from 2006-2012 was made public following a year-long court battle by The Washington Post and the Charleston Gazette-Mail of West Virginia.

The Post made part of the database publicly accessible on July 18. By Aug. 20, the newspaper reported it had registered more than 38,000 downloads of the data and more than 550 messages from local journalists

and others.

The information has provided many insights and a lot of great journalism.

But one method of analysis that has been used skews the data and makes frontier counties with far fewer pharmacies appear to be worse than other data suggest.

Oregon numbers

Recently, The Oregonian used the database to publish names and addresses of pharmacies in Oregon along with the number of hydrocodone and oxycodone pills each pharmacy sold from 2006-2012.

The Oregonian chose to rank the list of Oregon pharmacies based on the number of pills sold per county resident per year. In a county with only one pharmacy, the number of pills sold was divided by the county pop-

ulation and then by seven, the number of years.

In the case of counties with more than one pharmacy, the number of pills sold was still divided by the total county population to determine a rate for ranking, not by a number that more accurately reflected a pharmacy's market share.

Multnomah County, for example, had 134 pharmacies from 2006-2012, according to The Oregonian's figures, and 709,586 residents. Dividing the number of pills sold by one pharmacy by that large population number skewed the rate significantly. While the top 34 pharmacies in The Oregonian's ranking had double-digit rates, all 134 Multnomah pharmacies had rates of six or less.

But according to The Oregonian's

See Opioids, Page A18

Palmer withdraws resignation

Committee prepares to review theft complaint against sheriff

By Sean Hart
Blue Mountain Eagle

Grant County Sheriff Glenn Palmer said a theft complaint filed against him is false and that he is withdrawing his resignation.

Gordon Larson alleged in a complaint that Palmer knowingly possessed, or knew the whereabouts of, an engraved fishing pole Larson lost and "failed to take the ethical and lawful appropriate action of retrieving and returning the pole."

Palmer, who informed Grant County Court Aug. 14 of his intention to resign in a couple months, denied the claim.

"These allegations are false, and my intent to fight them is forthcoming," Palmer said in a statement on Facebook. "I will be staying on until the end of my term, and as long as this behavior continues, I will continue to seek reelection."

The Police Policy Committee of the Oregon Department of Public Safety Standards and Training will review the complaint and any written information Palmer provides Nov. 21.

Larson, who retired from the Oregon State Police in 2014, said the pole was a retirement gift built and engraved with his name, years of service, the OSP emblem and a golden OSP badge inserted into the handle by OSP Sgt. Tom Hutchison and his son Brandon Hutchison, who later worked as a deputy for the Grant County Sheriff's Office.

Without the reel, Larson said the pole was

See Palmer, Page A18



Sheriff Glenn Palmer

SCHOOLS' BACK IN SESSION



The Eagle/Angel Carpenter

Humbolt Elementary fifth-grader Trey Hall gives Carter Watterson a high-five as they pass each other on the first day of school.



The Eagle/Angel Carpenter

Humbolt Elementary fifth-grade teacher Anna Stargel hands out markers for her students' notebooks on the first day of school.

By Angel Carpenter
Blue Mountain Eagle

Five school districts in Grant County opened their doors to students on Monday for the first day of school.

Grant School District No. 3's Humbolt Elementary, Seneca School and Grant Union Junior-Senior High School and Prairie City, Dayville, Long Creek and Monument school districts started Monday. Grant Union high school students started Tuesday.

Students at Humbolt Elementary School in Canyon City seemed bright-eyed and ready to learn.

Humbolt Principal Darbie Dennison welcomed several new staff members.

New teachers include Andrea Ashley and Jessica Suchorski for sixth grade, Vanessa Houpt for first grade and Jessa Bigsby and Sena Raschio for kindergarten. Title I teacher Regan Reneau and several other staff members were also welcomed aboard.

Fifth-grade teacher Kelli LaFramboise said she would spend some time reviewing classroom routines with her students.

"It helps the school year go smoothly," she said. "It's always exciting to meet the new students and set the tone with them."

She said she likes to share the fun of learning with her students.

"That's usually my goal," she said.

