

## Deputy

Continued from Page A1

the Eagle seeking clarification, the DOJ employee admitted Oct. 18 there was an investigation.

"We do have a pending investigation for Dep-

uty Mobley," the employee wrote. "Because it is an open investigation, the records are exempt from disclosure."

Mobley remains a county employee and has been paid seven month's worth of wages and benefits during her absence. At \$21.83 per

hour, she earns about \$3,785 per month.

Wright said all benefits remain active when an employee is on administrative leave, including PERS retirement, paid holidays, life insurance, long-term disability insurance and health insurance.

PERS retirement contributions cost 11% of wages for law enforcement officers, about \$416 per month.

Accruing 10 hours of vacation and eight hours of sick leave each month costs another \$393.

Dividing the 80 paid holiday hours equally through-

out the year gives a monthly cost of about \$145.

Wright said life insurance and long-term disability costs vary by age and monthly wages but range from about \$20-30 per month.

The county pays between \$840 and \$2,335 per month

for health insurance, depending on other family members on the plan, Wright said.

Seven months of administrative leave has cost county taxpayers between \$39,200 and \$49,700. Each month of additional leave will cost between \$5,600 and \$7,100.

## Students

Continued from Page A1

He's one of Bowling's four employees.

"We need more kids going into this line of work," Bowling said, adding it's been a challenge to find quality help.

Bowling said, although Hendrix-Mills didn't have a background in auto body, "he can be taught the right way, and he doesn't have any bad habits."

Sasser said she's impressed with Hendrix-Mills' progress.

"Paul is a resilient young man, who is willing and able to work and needed the positive outlet to find his path," she said. "This is exactly what this program is designed to be."

She said he's one of three students who gained permanent employment from their internship during the summer program.

"I am very proud of the strength and direction that he gained in just the few months that I have worked with him," Sasser said.

During the summers of 2018 and 2019, Sasser worked with groups of youths, assessing their interests and abilities, and contacted area business owners to place them for internships.

The students were paid, through the program grant awarded to the ESD, to work as interns at local businesses, including Mercedes Locke, now a junior at Grant Union, who wants to be a beautician. She interned with hairstylist Laura Saul, who owns Cloud 9 beauty salon in John Day, last summer.

Others worked at Bright Beginnings, Grant-Harney County CASA, Grant County Regional Airport, John Day River Veterinary Clinic, Java Jungle's coffee shop and Grant Union and Prairie City schools for landscaping.

They also rolled up their sleeves at the John Day Community Garden where they helped tend a pumpkin patch among other duties.

"The Summer Program added 28 paid positions to the county for the nine weeks," Sasser said.

The youth created portfolios with information gathered on career research as well as college costs and financial aid.

"My part is to be a job developer, to help find them the position, then monitor and job coach," Sasser said, adding she checks in with the students to make sure they're doing what is expected of them.

Sasser said, because of the success they're having with the summer program, their format is being used as a model for



Contributed photo

**Mercedes Locke, now a junior at Grant Union, shampoos a client's hair with instruction from hairstylist Laura Saul at her John Day business, Cloud 9, last summer. Locke, who is interested in a career in the cosmetology field, was part of the Summer Youth Work Experience Program, coordinated by Tami Sasser.**



The Eagle/Angel Carpenter  
**Tami Sasser, Grant Union Youth Transition Program coordinator, helps a student with his task of placing library books back in order Sept. 26 at the school.**

other areas.

This year, students from Monument, Long Creek, Dayville and Prairie City schools can now be part of the program, with help from YTP specialist Christi DeHaven.

DeHaven was a teacher's aide for 17 years through Grant School District 3 before beginning her work for the ESD this school year, currently helping a total of 10 students.

For students who haven't discovered what field of work they'd like to pursue, she starts by filtering out the jobs that don't interest them.

"Working with the kids, they get excited when someone is helping them and is interested in them and is proud of them," she said.

Wendy Burrell, who is the special education director for the ESD, teaches students in Long Creek, Monument and Dayville. She also provides assessments to determine whether students or other young adults are eligible for the summer program.

"We build from that in the community," Sasser said.

Burrell said she's been impressed with the way local business owners have allowed

the program to evolve through the internships.

"We appreciate the support of the businesses," DeHaven said. "Without their support, this program wouldn't be able to flourish."

Other students currently work around town, including Grant Union senior Jessie Stubbs at Pioneer Feed in John Day who helps customers load up everything from bird seed to cattle panels.

Jonathan DesJardin, also a Grant Union senior, has been working at Chester's Thiftway and Figaro's in John Day.

Recently, he and Skylar Watson-Vogel were sorting books at the Grant Union library and placing them back in order on the shelves.

Sasser hopes to build a relationship with the Grant County Library to allow work experiences for the YTP students.

YTP is "giving a face to these kids and showing they are capable, willing and able," she said. "It is giving them skills they can take forward into their adult life."

Besides giving the youth work experience, the programs can also help students pursue post-secondary education.

One Grant Union student, who was involved with the program for two years, graduated last school year and received funding for tuition fees though Vocational Rehabilitation to attend Central Oregon Community College in Bend.

Sasser plans to continue building the program.

Next year, she hopes to take youths to tour a college or business outside of the county.

They'll learn this fall if they've been awarded funding to incorporate the new idea.

"Now that YTP is county-wide, I'm excited to see how it evolves in the next two years," Sasser said.

"The Youth Transition Program allows students to build a relationship and face with the business owners and that really broadens their horizons," she said. "There are so many different careers and opportunities that the students can discover through this program."

## Hemp

Continued from Page A1

fields with mold.

In Central Oregon, a devastating hail storm has already caused an estimated \$25 million in hemp crop losses.

Yet farmers remain optimistic.

"With all of the research we've done, the payback on this crop is fairly significant," McGill said. "We were willing to take the risk this year to see if that's true."

### New crop

Like marijuana, hemp is a member of the cannabis family, though under law it can contain no more than 0.3% tetrahydrocannabinol, or THC, the psychoactive component that gets users high.

In 1970, President Richard Nixon signed the Controlled Substances Act that banned the cultivation of all cannabis, including hemp. The ban remained in place for over four decades, until the 2014 Farm Bill allowed state legislatures to decide if they wanted to allow and regulate production.

Oregon issued its first hemp grower's license in 2015. By last year, the state had 584 registered growers and 11,754 acres.

The 2018 Farm Bill and the Hemp Farming Act of 2018 finally legalized hemp nationwide. Since then the number of growers and acres in Oregon has skyrocketed. As of Oct. 7, the Oregon Department of Agriculture had licensed 1,940 growers and just over 63,000 acres — a 473% increase over last year.

Beau Whitney, vice president and senior economist at New Frontier Data, which tracks the industry, said the 2019 Oregon hemp crop could be worth more than \$1 billion.

"It would quickly ascend to the number one agricultural commodity in Oregon in one year," Whitney said.

Whether that actually happens is still a question mark. Whitney said it remains to be seen how many acres of hemp in Oregon will actually be harvested and sold.

"Where there's great economic potential in Oregon for hemp, the question is will (growers) be able to realize that?" Whitney said. "Will they be able to bring the product to market successfully?"

### Harvest hazards

Jay Noller, director of Oregon State University's Global Hemp Innovation Center, hit the road to visit with about two dozen hemp farmers across the state, from the Willamette Valley to the Klamath Basin.

Driving along Inter-

state 5 past fields of verdant hemp, Noller said he likes what he sees so far overall.

"The colors look good," Noller said. "I'm not seeing any brown spots, which is a clear indicator of disease."

This year's cooler, wetter harvest season caught many growers by surprise, Noller said. He acknowledged that mold is a greater concern for farms in 2019 than it was a year ago, especially in rainy Western Oregon up to the foothills of the Coast Range.

Elizabeth Gale felt the pressure as she and her partner, Justin Rotter, and his brother, Jeremy, raced against the rain to harvest 2.5 acres of hemp at Living Harvest Farm near Dallas.

To make matters worse, the company Gale planned to use to dry their hemp was running several weeks behind installing new equipment. Dryer space is already at a premium as farms try to avoid having mold turn their buds into mush.

"It really took over my whole life, to be honest with you," Gale said. "The weather is basically that ticking time bomb for the crop."

Gale's predicament illustrates a tricky balancing act for hemp farmers — harvest too soon, and the plants won't fully mature and reach their peak CBD content, losing value at processing. Harvest too late, and Mother Nature can wreck an entire year of work.

Matt Cyrus, a hemp farmer in Central Oregon and board member of the Oregon Industrial Hemp Farmers Association, said hemp is living up to its reputation as a high-risk, high-reward venture.

"If you raise a good crop, it's worth a lot of money. But it's also an expensive crop to raise," Cyrus said. "Especially this year with the wet fall, it's cost a lot of farmers a lot of money."

Cyrus, who is also president of the Deschutes County Farm Bureau, is entering his fourth season of growing hemp with his father near Sisters. He went from 30 acres the last three years to 100 acres this year, in addition to growing hay and raising a few cattle.

Cyrus said this year's crop is the best he's ever grown. Others in the region were not so lucky.

Some hemp farmers in Central Oregon were blindsided by heavy hail in August. Cyrus estimated 400 to 500 acres were significantly damaged.

"Some of them lost their whole crops," he said.

### Big business

Gale said that for her and many other farmers, relying on hemp is still too risky as the industry continues to find its footing.

"My mortgage can't rely on this crop, or I will lose my mind," she said.

Other companies, however, have come into Oregon and are betting big on hemp.

Hemptown USA, founded in January, is now growing hemp in three states, including Oregon, Colorado and Kentucky. The Southern Oregon farm, near Central Point, is a sprawling 511-acre operation in the heart of the Rogue Valley — part of a fertile growing region known as the Emerald Triangle.

Several hundred field workers paced rows of waist-high plants on a late September morning, picking hearty hemp flowers and loading them into plastic bins for drying. Later, a combine will come through to harvest the remaining stalks and biomass.

The farm, formerly Oregon Sol, is run by Rod Wolterman and his business partner, Dave Singery. They began in 2016 with just under 2 acres of marijuana, before a glut of pot on the market tanked prices.

Singery said it was a no-brainer to switch to hemp. They grew 50 acres in 2018, which proved to be a success. Then Wolterman met with investors from Vancouver, Canada, at a marijuana business conference in Las Vegas, and they joined forces to create Hemptown USA.

Michael Townsend, the company's president, said they were able to raise close to \$23 million to scale up the operation to 500 acres. The company spent \$5.5 million on hemp seed alone.

Townsend said the focus of Hemptown USA is not on CBD, but rather another hemp extract known as cannabigerol, or CBG, which is proving beneficial to treat skin conditions such as eczema and psoriasis.

"It's as hot as a pistol," Townsend said. "We're very excited to be in that space."

In July, the company bought Kirkman Group, based in Lake Oswego, to manufacture CBG and CBD products such as tinctures and creams. Hemptown USA has also announced the launch of a new chewing gum with 15 milligrams of CBD and 5 milligrams of CBG.

"From our perspective, we have to start formulating and creating intellectual property," Townsend said. "We'll patent-protect these formulations."

Singery said he believes the farm can scale up even more, aiming for 2,000 acres of hemp by next year. The biggest challenge, he said, is finding enough labor for harvest while continuing to build storage capacity.

"We already have plenty of property if we want it," Singery said. "We have a very good reputation around here with our vendors, with our farmers."

**Lake Creek Youth Camp Fundraiser**

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**- For more Information -**  
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**Time**  
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**Place**  
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