

Heppner based organization asked to take run Grant County mental health agency

Editor's Note: The following story ran in the July 16, 2008 edition of the Blue Mountain Eagle and was written by Scotta Calister.

Grant County is asking Heppner-based organization to operate the county's mental health, counseling and disabilities services department.

The County Court last week gave County Judge Mark Webb the go-ahead to pursue an agreement with the Community Counseling Solutions (CCS), formerly Morrow-Wheeler Behavioral Health, to provide "stop-gap" services as details for a longer-term arrangement are worked out.

The court wants the non-profit to step in to manage the Grant County Center for Human Development as it copes with staff changes and other challenges.

Webb said the County Court will still be the mental health authority for the county, but that the new arrangement would put direct management and services "in more appropriate hands" than those of the County Court.

Combining the administration of mental health programs is becoming more common as counties grapple with tight budgets, and the state encourages such consolidation for cost efficiency, Webb said.

Grant County has

been considering other ways to operate its mental health and counseling department for about a year. Adding urgency to the move are some key staff vacancies as the county begins a new fiscal year.

Director Bill Harrington's tenure with the GCCHD ended at the end of June, after the court decided not to renew a waiver for his position because he did not hold the master's degree required for the job. Harrington had been providing crisis counseling and other services for the Center under a waiver from the state.

The Center also has lost another counselor, Maxine Day, who left to become the Grant County Extension 4-H agent.

CCS is one of three agencies the County Court has looked to as possible managers of the mental health and substance abuse department.

The Court has been talking informally with CCS for about a year. Other agencies considered as possibilities were the mental health programs in Harney County and Wallowa County.

Each has a successful program, noted Webb, and could handle interim management of Grant County's program.

However, commissioners weren't certain that Harney or Wallowa would

take on the Center long-term.

Webb and the commissioners also cited concerns about the distance from Wallowa County, and the fact that Harney already is looking at adding Lake County's program to its responsibilities.

"To my mind, CCS is the best option," Webb said.

The goal, emphasized Commissioner Boyd Britton, is better service for the citizens.

Webb said he expects CCS to use both its director, Kimberly Lindsay, and an on-site manager to run the GCCHD.

He said CCS has been clear that no county jobs would be lost in the transition, although some responsibilities may be reshuffled.

He said his understanding from talks with CCS is "they don't let people go."

Center employees likely would become employees of CCS under a long-term contract. The county already is hiring to fill vacancies at the Center, and Webb said he expects CCS to be involved in that process.

The Court said they appreciated Lindsay and CCS for their commitment to helping a Grant County explore its alternatives for mental health services.

Murray family wins July Yard of the Month



John and Ann Murray

By Kay Proctor

John and Ann Murray received recognition from the Heppner Garden Club for July's Yard of the Month.

The Murray's family orientated home is located at 275 Rock Street, an appropriate name for the steep, rocky residential neighborhood. Blasting had to be done to pour foundations when Kinzua built the house in the 1970's for their mill managers. The surrounding seven acres were originally left natural for low maintenance; trees were added along the driveway only. Beginning in 1988 when John and Ann purchased their home, the Murrays began adding terraces to increase usable, outdoor living space.

To the south side of their home is a wooden deck with a view of the city. Next to the deck, is a terraced play area with a lawn. John and 'the boys' have been the lawn mowers and weed-pullers over the years. The boys are John and Ann's sons; Luke, Sean, Ian and Kevin who have one sister, Laurie.

At the property's entrance, a basketball pad for the kids was added that needed high-sided walls to hold back the hillside. Also set up in this area are bow hunting targets.

The west side of their yard has a sunny, terraced area for John's large vegetable garden. Good topsoil was brought in one loader bucket at a time due to limited access up the slope. While a fence keeps the family dogs, Bella and Penny, out of the garden, a walkway takes human

visitors to the plot filled with a variety of vegetables, including 'Kerr's Pink' and 'Marris Piper', which are, respectively, an Irish and a Scottish variety of potatoes. John uses straw to mulch between rows holding in moisture and limiting weeds. After the growing season, the straw is rototilled in to benefit the soil.

This year for the first time, John started some of his own vegetable from seed including tomatoes and eggplants and hopes to someday have a small, permanent greenhouse to continue to do so.

In the vegetable garden, a clever watering system designed by John uses a mainline, poly-drip line and varying heights of risers zip-tied to moveable stakes. Sprinklers in the center are 360 degrees for complete coverage while sprinklers on the perimeter are 180 degree to prevent over spray. The entire system is removable when need be.

That is only part of the extensive drip line system that John designed and installed to conserve water, yet enable the Murrays to surround their home with greenery. There are a total of 12 stations and a few sprinkler heads are used, but most irrigation is out of the line ...the system uses over 2,000' of drip line. Each spring, an entire day is spent repairing and preparing the system for use.

The drip line has kept the numerous trees growing that John planted after using a pickaxe to break through rocks and backfilled with soil brought in. In addition to a tree row of evergreens along a property border, there are 25 fruit trees. Fruit produced is used for jams, drying or eaten fresh.

A terraced bed grows strawberries. Blackberries are grown near their downtown business,

Murray Drugs, where John and Ann are fulltime pharmacists. Future plans at home are to cover their deck with a canopy of grapevines. Eventually, John would like to add a few more retaining walls.

Ann's favorite place in the yard is by the front door where a rocky slope was terraced and then planted with colorful perennials. She said her best gardening advice is to "marry a(n) (OSU) Master Gardener" like John is. Ann credits her husband with all the outdoor planning and states that she is "proud of John" for all the work he does outside in addition to his responsibilities at work, keeping up with their kids and activities in the community. She and John are both natives of South Morrow County.

John believes that gardening is "good for a person" and encourages others to garden; it's easy to do and growing even small amounts is enjoyable. He hopes to see others enter their gardening results in the Morrow County Fair as a way to be involved. To help make gardening available to others, John is active with the local community garden that provides free plots to city residents.

He also states that he was inspired by his older brother, Mark, who together with his wife has planted and maintained a showplace at their Prairie City home. John also credits Ida Farra, a member of the Heppner Garden Club and friend to many, for her gardening support and serving as an inspiration to him and others.

With their dedication to family, home and community, in many ways John and Ann Murray are already inspiring others.

Yard of the Month recognition is co-sponsored by Heppner TV, MCGG Green Feed, the City of Heppner and the Heppner Garden Club.

Opportunity Online Grants help public libraries improve quality of free computer access

The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation announced today \$8.1 million in grants to help public libraries in 11 states improve and sustain free, quality access to computers. These Opportunity Online grants specifically will help upgrade computer hardware in public libraries serving communities with high concentrations of poverty that are at risk of having outdated technology.

Millions of Americans use computers at their public libraries to improve their education, find economic opportunities, access e-government services, and contribute to their communities. Unfortunately, many libraries do not have adequate funding to maintain quality technology services and meet community demand.

This is the second of three rounds of Opportunity Online grants. More than 800 library branches in Alaska, Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, North Carolina, Oregon, Rhode Island, Virginia, and Washington state are eligible in

this round. Libraries must provide local matching funds to receive the grants. The required local commitment nationwide is expected to total \$4.1 million.

Opportunity Online grants are designed to help public libraries like the Essex Public Library secure sustained local funding for computer replacements and upgrades. Because 80 percent of public library funding comes from local sources, the grants require participating libraries to secure a local match, preferably in the form of a local government commitment, to demonstrate they can sustain investments in technology into the future. Librarians participating in the program are required to attend a professional development conference to help them build the skills and confidence they need to raise awareness about the value of their libraries and increase local support.

Heppner Public Library is on the list of eligibility for Opportunity Online Hardware Grants.

Intermediary organizations will administer and manage the grants in each state. The round-two Opportunity Online grants were awarded to the following organizations: Bibliographical Center for Research (BCR), NELINET, PALINET, the Southeastern Library Network (SOLINET), and the Library of Virginia. The foundation, in partnership with its intermediaries, has contacted all libraries eligible for the grants.

To date, the foundation has invested \$325 million in grants and other support to install and sustain computers in libraries and train thousands of library staff in all 50 states and U.S. territories. Opportunity Online hardware grants are expected to be the last grants given by the foundation to fund computer upgrades in U.S. public libraries with vulnerable technology, but the foundation continues to support libraries through investments in Internet connectivity, research, training, and advocacy.

Articles wanted for annual fair edition

The annual Morrow County Fair is fast approaching. Once again this year the Heppner Gazette-Times will be putting together a special fair edition. Anyone interested in writing any fair related articles are asked to turn in those articles by Friday, July 25. Articles can be dropped of at the Heppner Gazette-Times or emailed to editor@rapid-serve.net.

Marriages

Morrow County Clerk Bobbi Childers has released the following report of marriage licenses issued:

-July 18: Ramon Jesus Guel, 23, Molalla, and Melissa Renae Arden, 21, Hermiston.

Blood drive to be held at Sr. Center

A Heppner community blood drive will be held Thursday, August 7, from 1-6 p.m. at the St. Patrick's Senior Center. To make an appointment to donate, call 800-787-9691.

Senior Center Menu

Christian Life Center church members will be serving lunch on Wednesday, July 30. The menu will include meat loaf, mashed potatoes and gravy, peas and carrots, hot rolls and cake.

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Wedding Tables

Sharon Robinson and Ryan Miller
Shower - July 26, 2008
Wedding - Aug. 2, 2008

Joe and Kathleen (Greenup) Albitre
Wedding and Reception - Aug. 2, 2008

Jill Sorey and Corey Miller
Wedding - Oct. 18, 2008

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