

The Official Newspaper
of the City of Heppner and the County of Morrow

Heppner

GAZETTE-TIMES

U.S.P.S. 240-420

Morrow County's Home-Owned Weekly Newspaper

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Published weekly by Sykes Publishing and entered as periodical matter at the Post Office at Heppner, Oregon under the Act of March 3, 1879. Periodical postage paid at Heppner, Oregon. Office at 188 W. Willow Street. Telephone (541) 676-9228. Fax (541) 676-9211. E-mail: editor@rapidsolve.net or david@rapidsolve.net. Web site: www.heppner.net. Postmaster send address changes to the Heppner Gazette-Times, P.O. Box 337, Heppner, Oregon 97836. Subscriptions: \$31 in Morrow County; \$25 senior rate (in Morrow County only; 65 years or older); \$37 elsewhere; \$31 student subscriptions.

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For Obituaries: Obituaries are published in the Heppner GT at no charge and are edited to meet news guidelines. Families wishing to include information not included in the guidelines or who wish to have the obituary written in a certain way must purchase advertising space for the obituary.

For Letters to the Editor: Letters to the Editor MUST be signed by the author. The Heppner GT will not publish unsigned letters. All letters MUST include the author's address and phone number for use by the GT office. The GT reserves the right to edit letters. The GT is not responsible for accuracy of statements made in letters. Any letters expressing thanks will be placed in the classifieds under "Card of Thanks" at a cost of \$10.

Obituaries

Michael Allen Mills

It is with great sadness we share that Michael Allen Mills passed away on Jan. 26, 2023, at the age of 65 at his home in Milwaukee, OR. A graveside service will be held at the Rockford Cemetery on Feb. 11 at 1 p.m. A luncheon will immediately follow at the Mirabeau Park Hotel and Convention Center, 1100 N Sullivan Rd., Spokane Valley, WA.

Mike will be remembered for his keen sense of humor, his razor-sharp wit and, most importantly, as a dedicated and loving friend and father. He will be greatly missed.

Mike was born in Spokane, WA to parents Larry and Betty (Jahns) Mills. At the age of two, the family moved to Odessa, WA, and then when Mike was in seventh grade the family settled in Heppner. Mike was always close with his older sister Dianne. As children the two enjoyed poking fun at each other, and as they grew older, they continued to enjoy lovingly poking fun at each other. Later in life they would find that they shared a love of horticulture (which they called their "farmer gene") and would have long talks about cultivating flowers, where Mike would tease Dianne for not knowing the scientific names of plants, and Dianne would stubbornly refuse to learn them.

Mike thrived as a Heppner Mustang and was active in academics and athletics. He became defensive captain of the football team his senior year. His love of sports, and especially football, would last his entire life.

After high school Mike attended Oregon State University (OSU) where he had the rare privilege of developing lifelong friendships with Larry Breshears, Rick Hayes and Ron Monnier. In their younger years, the three men enjoyed countless hours of frustratingly bad Beavers football, endless rounds of golf (which they all admit that Mike was superior at), and the "occasional" beer. For almost 50 years the four remained best of friends—there are not words that can express the value of a friendship such as theirs.

After graduating from OSU, Mike would go on to get his law degree from the University of Utah, and then he returned to Heppner, where he practiced law with Kuhn, Spicer, and Mills and started his family. Parenting, like being a fan of Beavers football, can be challenging, but there was no role that Mike played in his life that he excelled at more than being a father. His love for his two children, Chloe and Chandler Mills, was fierce and unconditional. Whether they were visiting Silver Falls Park, or enjoying episodes of Dr. Who, Mike lived for spending time with Chloe and Chandler.

Mike dedicated his life to his children, and he was always there to lift them up when needed. They in turn loved him greatly.

Mike is survived by his daughter Chloe Diane Mills and son Chandler Moses Mills; his dotting mother Betty (Jahns) Mills; and sister Dianne (Mills) Stickney.

Mike was proceeded in death by his father Larry Mills; maternal grandparents Harold and Gladys Jahns; and fraternal grandparents Harold and Mary Mills.

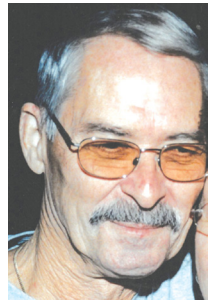
The family has requested that remembrances be made in the form of contributions to the Heppner Mustang football team, c/o Heppner High School, PO Box 67, Heppner, OR 97836. (Heppner High School Football in the memo.)

Sweeney Mortuary of Heppner is in charge of arrangements. You may sign the online condolence book at www.sweeneymortuary.com.

Robert D. "Bob" Irby

Robert D. "Bob" Irby died on Jan. 27, 2023, at his home in Hermiston, OR at the age of 78 years. No service will be held at this time.

Bob was born on May 5, 1944, in Heppner to parents Glenn and Gladys (Lawson) Irby. He was raised and attended schools in Heppner, graduating from Heppner High School in the class of 1962. He then attended business school in Portland, OR for a time before he enlisted in the United States Navy. Bob was stationed at the General Westmoreland Headquarters, United States Military Assistance Command in downtown Saigon, Vietnam. Later he served on the USS Independence for the remainder of his duty until his honorable discharge.



Obituaries

He was united in marriage to Claudia Duncan on June 1, 1979, in Reno, NV. Bob worked for the City of Hermiston for 44 years, retiring as the finance director.

He is survived by his wife, Claudia Irby; children Kyli Mendoza (Arturo) and Corey Cartwright, both of Hermiston; grandchildren Brielle and Ariona Mendoza; great-grandchildren Aaniya, Issiah, Anessah, Haigan, Junior and LaLia; his sister, Mary Banks, of Pendleton; and a brother, Bill Irby, of Hermiston. His buddy "Kit Kat" watched over him and will surely miss him.

Please share memories of Bob with his family at burnsmortuaryhermiston.com. Burns Mortuary of Hermiston is in charge of arrangements.

Tom Martin

Tom Martin, a long time Lexington resident, passed away on Friday, Feb. 3, 2023, surrounded by family. He was 79 years old. A celebration of life will be planned for a future date.

Tom Martin was born Nov. 5, 1943, in Pendleton to Roy and Juanita Martin. He started school as a Lexington Jackrabbit and graduated from Ione High School. After high school, Tom played running back for Columbia Basin Community College. He then attended Oregon State University until entering the Army to serve his country.

When Tom was young, he managed a ranch in Colorado. He spent most of his life farming in Morrow County. Later in life, Tom lived in Morristown, AZ in the winter months, roping and playing golf. He also rode saddle broncs, roped calves and fished for steelhead. Tom's true passion was team roping, which he enjoyed into his 70s.

Tom is survived by his wife, Shirley Martin; sons, Steve Marlatt and Joedy Marlatt (Tammy); daughters, Susan Warner (Scott), Cathy Smith (Brett) and Jennifer Jorgensen (Jared). Grandchildren include Nicholas Warner, Katie Warner, Rebecca Warner, Alex Smith, Aaron Smith, Danica Jorgensen, Montana Marlatt, as well as great-grandchild Ashlynn Marlatt. Tom loved his family and talked about them all the time.

Memorial contributions may be made to Willow Creek Golf Course, 53726 OR-74, Heppner, OR 97836.

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Health district hires new ER provider

-Continued from PAGE ONE also at the meeting to give MCHD board members and staff an update on the tax situation in Morrow County. The health district is a county-wide taxing district and receives tax revenue from property taxes in the county.

Gorman reported that the health district's taxable value was \$3.7 billion taxable value—the same as the county since it is a county-wide district. The county levied \$54 million in total certified property taxes county-wide and has already collected about 96 percent of that, Gorman said. The health district received \$2.2 million in regular levy with a local option of \$1.2 million.

"It's about the same as last year. About the same as the last several years, but we just don't have the delinquencies that we used to have," said Gorman. "I think it just goes to show that the economy in the region is good and so people have the money to pay their tax obligations."

Every dollar the county receives in taxes is divided among the taxing districts, Gorman said, and the health district basically gets 6.4 cents for every dollar. The county's taxable value was about \$800 million over what it was last year, mostly due to some expiring enterprise zone exemptions, as well as an increase in assessed values for all other properties.

Total county market value was \$9.2 billion, an increase of over a billion dollars, mostly due to Amazon's newest site at Gar Swanson.

"You're going to hear me say 'Amazon' a lot," he said, though he added that there is also a lot of residential and commercial development in the county. "We're on the track to hit \$10 billion here pretty soon."

Looking to the future, Gorman said he expects to see values continue to increase from new development and expiring exemptions. He also said the number of partition and subdivision plats has not decreased.

"We have a pretty diverse economy," he said, listing farming, Amazon and forestry, to name a few. "I think we're going to be able to hold our own even if the whole world economy might turn down. People still need to eat; they're still going to need two by fours."

In her report, Roberts told the board that employee turnover rate is four percent, which is down slightly. The report showed the vacancy rate up slightly at 8.5 percent, or 14 positions, which Roberts said was because of some new positions created. Roberts added that some of the po-



JR Lieuallen

sitions had been filled since the report was created. She also reported that the average waiting time for appointments is 10 days in Heppner, six at Ione Community Clinic and seven days at Irrigon Medical Clinic. Total visits at MCHD are holding steady, Roberts said, and even increasing slightly. Visits at Pioneer Memorial Clinic were 344 the previous month, with 105 in Ione, 359 in Irrigon and 149 at Boardman Immediate Care.

MCHD chief financial officer J. R. Lieuallen told the board the district had a down month, losing money in December. Operating revenue for the month was \$1,527,364 and operating expenses were \$1,988,487, for a loss of 461,123 in operations.

Lieuallen said there were several contributing factors and pointed out that one of those is salary and wages, where the district is over budget.

"There are a few things feeding into that," he said. One was the creation of Boardman Immediate Care, which was not budgeted for at the beginning of the year and contained a lot of up-front costs but also is bringing in revenue, he said, and another was the new staffing model in the ER.

For the month of December, the health district received revenue of \$12,629 for skilled swing bed care, \$41,126 for patient observation, \$46,778 non-skilled swing bed care, \$73,769 for hospital encounters. Ambulance revenue from all sources was \$229,347, and pharmacy revenue was \$141,391. Total patient accounts receivable for the year as of December were \$2,638,770, and total assets were \$13,990,705.

In other business, the MCHD board: -Appointed Sara Bayless to the EMS (Emergency Medical Services) Advisory Committee as the EMT representative from Boardman;

-Approved a \$38,883 Microsoft Licensing Agreement with Dynamic Computer Consulting, Inc. out of Pendleton. The agreement locked in the rate for products the health district already uses;

-Approved a contract for a Novarad interface for \$7,059 initial fee plus \$220 per month license subscription. Roberts said it is an interface between the district's past system and an electronic health record system the district will be upgrading to in May. "Which is helpful, because it reduces errors and increases efficiencies," said Roberts.

-Approved a peer review contract with Illinois Critical Access Hospital Network (ICAHN). Roberts told the board that Oregon along with other states allows health providers to receive a peer review to help improve services. In a peer review, someone from the same specialty, usually a physician, can review cases and provide feedback on it. "They want us to learn from instances of care good, bad or otherwise," said Roberts.

She told the board the health district already has a contract with an Oregon organization but wants to add a contract with ICAHN because they apparently have better turnaround times. Other Oregon facilities use them, and they appear to be compliant with all the applicable privacy laws.

Mahoney added that the Oregon group is smaller and has a limited number of resources, so their turnaround time has been slow and unreliable compared to what they hope ICAHN's will be.

Reviews would be initiated by the CEO but could come from a variety of sources ranging from complaints to random case reviews, Roberts said. The fee for a routine review is \$250 per record, while an expedited review is \$300 per record.

Roberts said it may replace the current organization, but there was nothing in either contract to prevent them using both while they determine if ICAHN is a good fit.

"I think if this has better turnaround times, we would use it," she said.

After the regular meeting, the board went into executive session. The stated purpose of the session included consideration of information or records that are exempt from public inspection

pertaining to ongoing or anticipated litigation or to trade secrets and which are exempt from disclosure.

The next meeting of the Morrow County Health District board will be Monday, Feb. 27, at 6:30 p.m.

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-Jeremiah 29:13
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