

Stanfield market robbed at gunpoint

By **JADE McDOWELL**
Staff Writer

Police are looking for a man who robbed the Center Market in Stanfield at gunpoint early Sunday morning.

Stanfield City Manager Blair Larsen, acting as public information officer for the Stanfield Police Department, said photos and a name would be released to the public soon but police already knew the identity of the suspect, who was “clearly visible on video surveillance.”

According to statements given to police by Cen-

ter Market owners Gurbal Singh and Jaswinder Kaur, Kaur was working at the market at 2 a.m. on Sunday when a man came in, pointed a gun at her and demanded she give him all of the money in the cash register. She handed over the money and called the police after he left.

“She was pretty shaken up,” Larsen said.

Singh said that his wife was scared during the incident. The man demanded she open the register and put all the money in a bag, he said, and when she moved toward him to do so

he hit her arm before taking the money.

“He ran away through the truck parking lot,” Singh said.

Larsen said police didn’t know yet exactly how much money was taken.

Stanfield Police Chief Bryon Zumwalt and Lt. Monty Toombs have been on paid administrative leave since Nov. 19 pending a Department of Justice investigation, leaving Stanfield with one active police officer in addition to support from Hermiston Police Depart-

ment and Umatilla County Sheriff’s Office. Both agencies responded to the 9-1-1 call at the market, but Stanfield’s department is taking the lead on the investigation.

Larsen said the robbery was not a case where having a full staff in the police department would have made a difference.

“Even if we were fully staffed, by the time someone got there he would have been gone,” Larsen said.

Center Market is located at 530 S Main St. in Stanfield.

City seeks applicants to develop new brand

After taking residents’ feedback to heart about its “You Can GROW Here” brand, the city of Hermiston is looking for community members to join its Hermiston’s Future Branding Committee.

The committee will meet for approximately two months to brainstorm new ideas for a city brand and then help seek public feedback on the proposals.

The city implemented “You Can GROW Here” in 2013, but after it was painted on the water tower south of town, replacing the watermelon image that had greeted visitors for decades, residents complained it sounded like an invitation to cultivate

marijuana. After a recent survey showed 67 percent of respondents disliked the tagline, the City Council voted on Nov. 23 to resurrect the branding committee, add 10 new members from the wider community and come up with new tagline options.

The committee is a partnership between the city, the Greater Hermiston Area Chamber of Commerce and Focal Point Marketing.

Applications for the committee can be found online at www.hermiston.or.us or at City Hall, 180 NE Second St. They are due at City Hall by 6 p.m., Friday, Dec. 18.

Newport Park renovations doing their job



STAFF PHOTO BY JADE McDOWELL

Half-finished renovations at Newport Park are already doing their job: Water from a recent rainstorm collected where the baseball field used to be instead of flooding neighbors’ homes. The city plans to plant grass back over the field once efforts to lower it are complete. Hermiston got about .5 inches of rain on Monday.

Old Stanfield High School up for sale

By **JADE McDOWELL**
Staff Writer

The old Stanfield High School is on the market, but Stanfield city councilors don’t think the city should buy it.

Kal Garton of Garton & Associates in Pendleton, told councilors at their Dec. 1 meeting that he had listed the school for sale and had spoken with potential buyers, but he thought the “highest and best use” for it would be a city-owned community center.

“What I want to do is just

plant a seed and then come back,” he said, handing out packets of details about the school.

The four-acre property and 47,000-square-foot building are listed for \$750,000.

Garton said a church had expressed interest in turning the building into a homeless shelter, the Horizon Project was looking into turning it into housing for the intellectually disabled and the Department of Veterans Affairs had looked at it too.

Councilor Jack Huxoll

said he thought the building was in too poor a condition and too expensive for the city to even consider buying.

“That building’s been there a lot of years,” he said. “I went to school there. I don’t think the city should have anything to do with it.”

Garton said the ground floor of the school had been remodeled and work had been done on the plumbing and electrical systems. The asbestos on the first floor had been abated, while most of the asbestos upstairs had been encapsulated. He said

there was lead paint upstairs but it wouldn’t be hard to take care of.

Councilor Pam McSpadden said even if the city could afford the building it would cost too much to remodel and address the problems, like asbestos.

Mayor Thomas McCann suggested that the issue be sent to the city’s building committee anyway so that they could take a closer look and make a formal recommendation. City Manager Blair Larsen said that would be done.



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED BY OREGON STATE POLICE

A Hermiston man was killed Saturday night in a two-vehicle crash in Highway 207 near Hermiston.

Two killed in weekend crashes

A Hermiston man died Saturday night in a crash with a commercial truck on Highway 207/Diagonal Road near Hermiston and a Philomath man died Friday on Interstate 84 near Board-

man. of Hermiston, was a passenger in Cook’s vehicle and left the scene before police arrived. They caught up with him at Good Shepherd where he was seeking treatment and interviewed him about the crash.

In the Saturday crash, Richard Dean Cook, 24, was driving a 2010 Chevrolet Traverse on the highway when he pulled onto Otis Lane, a private road, and backed into the highway in an attempt to change directions, according to Oregon State Police.

As he backed into the highway, his vehicle was struck on the driver’s side by a northbound semi driven by Harvey Hass, 62, of Umatilla. Both vehicles came to rest in the northbound lane, which was closed for more than two hours.

Cook was taken to Good Shepherd Medical Center, Hermiston, where he was pronounced dead. Hass wasn’t hurt in the collision. Jerome Martel Price, 30,

OSP was assisted at the scene by Hermiston Fire and Ambulance, Umatilla County Sheriff’s Office and the Oregon Department of Transportation.

On Friday, Keith Carney, 34, was driving eastbound on the highway near milepost 154 when, for unknown reasons, his 1985 Chevrolet pickup went off the road and hit a large boulder, according to OSP. The truck was engulfed in flames by the time emergency crews arrived on scene.

OSP reports Carney traveled more than 400 feet after going off the road. Troopers were assisted by Boardman fire and police, the Morrow County Sheriff’s Office and Oregon Department of Transportation.

14 cats removed from home, owner arrested

A Hermiston man was arrested Monday for animal neglect after police found 14 cats, three of which were dead, at his small residence.

According to a press release from Hermiston Police, officers at 12:50 p.m. responded to the home of David Zehner, 57, at 141 NE 7th St., on a report of animal neglect. Pet Rescue of Hermiston also responded and helped remove the cats from the home, including two that required immediate medical care.

Zehner cooperated with police but was ar-

rested for first degree animal neglect and lodged at the Umatilla County Jail in Pendleton.

“Though minimum care as defined by statute can be very subjective and is often the cause of varying opinions, it was clear based on the conditions our officers found the animals to be living in,” Police Chief Jason Edmiston said in the press release. “Minimum care was not being met for these animals.”

Edmiston also said he appreciated the work of Pet Rescue in removing the animals.

Prank calls create mess, briefly close McDonald’s restaurants

By **PHIL WRIGHT**
Staff Writer

Three local McDonald’s restaurants had to shut down after prank calls Sunday afternoon convinced employees to activate fire suppression systems.

Deputy state fire marshal Scott Goff in Pendleton said the calls targeted the McDonald’s in Hermiston, Pendleton, the Pilot Travel Center in Stanfield, and the Arrowhead Travel Plaza on the Umatilla Indian Reservation near Pendleton. The caller claimed to represent a fire protection equipment company that remotely monitored the fire suppression systems and asked staff to test those.

Employees at Stanfield, Pendleton and Arrowhead activated the systems, Goff said, causing a cascade of “wet chemical extinguishing agent” to cover deep fryers and more. He said he heard reports of this happening to McDonald’s in the Tri-Cities, Washington, as well.

“After staff activated the systems, then whoever it was on the phone let them know it was a prank,” Goff said.

The chemicals work to smother grease fires, and while the wet chemicals do not get all over the restaurant, Goff said it does make a mess, and the restaurants shut down temporarily.

Goff said the fire sup-

pression systems are not remotely controlled or monitored, and any testing must be done on site.

Goff notified Pendleton Fire Chief Mike Ciraulo and others about the pranks. Ciraulo said fire agencies do not call people to have

them test systems.

“We will personally visit you — a fire marshal, chief or personnel will arrive to test the system,” he said.

Ciraulo also said people can call the fire department if they have questions or want to seek verification.

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