

Restaurant inspection scores improve

By **JADE McDOWELL**
Staff Writer

Restaurants in Umatilla County and Morrow County are safer and more sanitary than they were three years ago, according to the latest round of restaurant inspection scores published by the health department.

Of all 213 establishments, 47 percent achieved a perfect score when subjected to an unannounced inspection between June and December 2015. During the same time period three years earlier, only 26 percent of the 185 restaurants had a perfect score.

During the second half of 2015 three local restaurants — Ruty's, Panda Inn and Ye Olde Pizza Shoppe in Hermiston — failed their initial inspections. Ruty's and Ye Olde Pizza Shoppe passed by a significant margin when re-inspected about a week later. There is not a score on file for Panda Inn's re-inspection.

Umatilla County Public Health inspector Joseph Fuimara said it's important to keep in mind that the scores come from what an inspector observed during a single visit in a six-month time period.

"It's a snapshot," he said. "Good restaurants can have a bad day when we're there, and bad restaurants can have a good day, so you have to take it with a grain of salt."

Fuimara has only been with Umatilla County Public Health for a month, but he spent eight years before that performing inspections in Walla Walla County.

Probably the biggest issue most restaurants have, he said, comes with the guidelines for holding food at certain temperatures.

Another common issue is separating different types of foods. He said sometimes in their bid to conserve space, employees will pack cooling and freezing areas so tightly that raw meat or eggs end up sitting on top of vegetables or fruit, which could cause cross-contamination.

"Just because we write a violation doesn't mean that (cross-contamination) has happened, it just means that the conditions are there that it could," he said.

Fuimara said another issue is finding food on non-food handling surfaces, such as crumbs on the kitchen floor or sauce

splashed on the wall. "That isn't a huge issue by itself, but it can become one," he said, noting that not cleaning up spills promptly can attract pests.

During its initial inspection, Ye Olde Pizza Shoppe received a score of 46 after an inspector spotted violations that included food stored past its expiration date, no paper towels near the handwashing sink, improperly labeled or mixed cleaning chemicals, burn cream stored above food, a broken thermometer, surfaces not being cleaned as often as required and an employee failing to wash their hands after taking a customer's dirty plate back to the kitchen.

However, the restaurant fixed enough of the issues to score an 83 when re-inspected a few days later and was in the process of fixing others, including ordering a new thermometer and proper light covers.

During its initial inspection Ruty's received a score of 55 after violations including missing paper towels and soap at a handwashing sink, vegetables stored at 44 degrees instead of 41, uncooked meat stored next to other foods and employees not washing their hands as often as required by law.

On its second inspection less than a week later, Ruty's passed with a score of 95.

Panda Inn received a 62 on its first inspection for violations including employees not washing hands as often as required, chicken sitting out at room temperature, items in the salad bar being kept at 44 degrees instead of 41 degrees and mouse droppings in the back storage room.

A second inspection was scheduled to be completed by another county during the gap between the former health inspector's departure and Fuimara's start date, but Fuimara said he merely has a note marking the inspection completed without giving a score.

Several restaurants that had scores below 80 during the first half of 2015 improved in the second to a 95 or better during their most recent inspection, including Sub Zero Restaurant and Lounge in Irrigon, Hale's in Hermiston and El Erradero in Stanfield.

Establishments must score at least a 70 to pass. If they don't, they are given up to two weeks to correct the problems before a re-inspection. If they fail again, the health department will shut them down.

Colton returns to cover education, public safety

Jennifer Colton returns to the newsroom this week as a reporter for the Hermiston Herald and East Oregonian.

An experienced journalist and freelance writer, Colton has been a staff reporter for the Argus Observer in Ontario, Ore., the Index-Journal in Greenwood, S.C., and for the Hermiston Herald, from January 2010 to March 2013.

For the past three years, she has worked at Cayuse Technologies in Pendleton and has written for local, regional, and national publications.

She will cover education, public safety and general assignment reporting out of the Hermiston office.

Colton fills the position vacated by Sean Hart, who was promoted to editor of the Blue Mountain Eagle in John Day. The Eagle, Herald and East Oregonian are part of EO Media Group.

Colton has a bachelor's degree in English with a journalism concentration from Eastern Oregon University in La Grande and is currently working on a master's degree in communication and leadership studies through Gonzaga University in Spokane.

She can be reached at 541-564-4534 or at jcolton@hermistonherald.com.

IN BRIEF

Spray Rodeo to hold queen tryouts

Queen tryouts for the May 28-29 Spray Rodeo will be held Saturday, March 26 at 12 noon at the Spray Rodeo grounds.

Contestants do not have to be local or Wheeler County residents, but they must be at least 15 years old and never have been married or had children.

For more information or an application, call 541-468-2442.

Class highlights communication with Alzheimer's patients

Explore how communication takes place with someone with Alzheimer's disease during an upcoming class offered by the Alzheimer's Association Oregon Chapter.

Effective Communication Strategies is Thursday from 6-7:30 p.m. at Good Shepherd Medical Center, 610 N.W. 11th St., Hermiston. The session is free, but registration is required.

Learning about communication, including sending and receiving messages through attitude, tone of voice, facial expressions and body language. As people with Alzheimer's disease and other dementias progress in their

journey and the ability to use words is lost, families need new ways to connect. Learn how sending and receiving messages is connected to tone of voice, attitude, facial expressions and body language.

For more information or to register, call 800-272-3900. Also, information about other upcoming classes is available at www.alz.org/oregon.

Writer gives voice to daughters of pop culture

The poetry editor for the online journal, Hyperlexia: poetry and prose about the autism spectrum, is the featured writer for February's First Draft Writers' Series.

Brittney Corrigan's work has been described as "richly narrative, deeply engaging, and warm. She will read from her new work Thursday at 7 p.m. at Pendleton Center for the Arts, 214 N. Main St. The event also includes a short open mic for audience members. First Draft is free and open to the public.

Corrigan, who was raised in Colorado, received a degree from Reed College in

Portland. Her poems have appeared in numerous journals and anthologies.

Corrigan describes her new manuscript, "Daughters," as a series of persona poems that re-imagine characters from mythology, folklore, fairy tales and pop culture from the perspective of their daughters. Featuring such characters such as Bigfoot, the Mad Hatter, Medusa and Dorothy from the "Wizard of Oz," it tackles such topics as aging, rebellion, loss, abuse and judgment.

For more about the author, visit www.brittneycorrigan.com. For additional information about the First Draft Writers' Series, call 541-278-9201 or visit www.pendletonarts.org.

Portland author to sign new book

Portland author Tom Towslee will be on hand as he signs and discusses his new book, "Paradise Girls."

A detective mystery that follows the story of freelance writer John Standard — this time he's in Zihuatanejo, Mexico. Although he went there to



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Medical scholarship applications are now being accepted from local qualified applicants through February 29th.

The Good Shepherd Community Health Foundation is again pleased to partner with Tualatin Imaging to offer a \$1,500 scholarship for students who have expressed an interest in pursuing a diagnostic imaging career.

For application requirements and application form, call 541-667-3419

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