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BRIEFLY

Pedro chosen as executive of the year

Greater Hermiston Area Chamber of Commerce director Debbie Pedro has been named the 2016 Chamber Executive of the Year by the Oregon State Chamber of Commerce.



Pedro was honored at a conference in October, according to a news release from the state chamber. She was recognized for her leadership in helping the chamber consistently meet or exceed its membership goals and for keeping "members well-served and staff performing at peak levels."

Pedro has served as the Hermiston chamber's director for 10 years and worked for the chamber for an additional six years before that. In 2014 she served as the board chair for the state chamber of commerce.

The Oregon State Chamber of Commerce provides support and assistance to local chambers and represents their interests to the state government.

CREATING A COMMUNITY

BEHIND BARS

Faith-based programs offer redemption, hope

By TAMMY MALGESINI
Community Editor

Reading a Bible for the first time a handful of years ago in a prison cell at Two Rivers Correctional Institution, Jose Avila-Flores was introduced to a loving God.

"I read that people were broken and needed love and care," he said. "I learned that I was lost but I was loved."

Now 28, Avila-Flores has been locked up for nearly nine years. Barely an adult when he was first incarcerated for attempted aggravated murder, the former Lane County resident is grateful for religious services offered at the prison.

"The chapel is a community of support," he said.

A sea of denim filled a multi-purpose room during a recent chapel service at the Umatilla prison, which houses both medium and minimum security inmates. The services are facilitated by various religious organizations and are offered seven days a week, said Don Hodney, a chaplain with the Oregon Department of Corrections since 2000.

Hodney, who echoed Avila-Flores' comments about community, said the worship services averages between 45 and 90 inmates.

"Religious services provide a sense of community — coming together in worship creates a community that seems to cross perceived boundaries of race, status or denomination loyalty," he said.

The services, Hodney said, provide an opportunity for inmates to become members of a community of faith where they can receive instruction on how to focus on God.

Ray Douglass, 47, who has been incarcerated for 11 years, has also gained skills by performing video production and PowerPoint presentations for services. However, he said participating in faith-based programs several times a week is more than a job to him.

"It leads to a renewal in your life and realizing what we've done is wrong," Douglass said. "It takes it beyond a head knowledge."

Coming to prison made things real for the former Yamhill County man. Douglass, too, appreciates the opportunity to not be so guarded.

"You always hear you have to be tough," he said. "But people can relax around here and let others in some."

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STAFF PHOTO BY TAMMY MALGESINI

Shane Hall on guitar watches as Kelly Zielke of Hermiston joins in singing with the Two Rivers Correctional Institution worship band — which also includes Jacob Lawrence on bass, Chester Gunter on drums and Joseph Opyd on keyboard (not pictured) — prior to a chapel service at the Umatilla prison.



STAFF PHOTO BY TAMMY MALGESINI

Ray Douglass, who has been incarcerated since 2005, sings along while running the projection equipment during a recent prison worship band rehearsal at Two Rivers Correctional Institution in Umatilla.



STAFF PHOTO BY TAMMY MALGESINI

Jacob Lawrence on bass and Shane Hall on guitar smile while rehearsing with the inmate worship band prior to a recent chapel service at Two Rivers Correctional Institution in Umatilla.



STAFF PHOTO BY TAMMY MALGESINI

Inmates bow their heads in prayer at the end of a recent chapel service at Two Rivers Correctional Institution in Umatilla.



STAFF PHOTO BY TAMMY MALGESINI

Tadd Bazant, who has been incarcerated since 2004, shares what it means to him to support an orphan at Otino Waa Children's Village in Uganda during a recent chapel service at Two Rivers Correctional Institution in Umatilla.

New year rings in with winter weather

Snow leads to multiple crashes on freeways since Sunday

Hermiston Herald

The new year brought a wave of winter weather to Eastern Oregon, creating treacherous roads and causing dozens of crashes.

Emergency medical personnel responded to several rollovers and other crashes since the weekend.

Pendleton ambulance crews responded to many crashes along Interstate 84

since Sunday. Pendleton covers the interstate from about Echo to the Umatilla Indian Reservation, but Pendleton Fire Chief Mike Ciraulo said city ambulances often roll beyond those limits to help partner agencies from Hermiston to the top of Cabbage Hill.

Umatilla County Fire District 1 had responded to seven crashes on Monday as of 4 p.m. Five of those crashes were on I-82 and I-84, with a few on local roads. UCFD employees said so far there have been no major injuries. Monday as of 2:45 p.m., Echo Fire Department had responded to three rollover accidents.

The most serious (accident) appeared to happen when an eastbound vehicle rolled and also ended up in the median.

Schools districts were supposed to be back in session this week, but Morrow County, Stanfield and Ione canceled classes on Monday because of the weather.

On Tuesday there were multiple districts, including Hermiston, Stanfield, Morrow County and Ione school districts that delayed the start of school by two

hours. Police, fire and ambulance crews in Morrow County spent the first night of 2017 responding to several slide-offs and crashes.

The Morrow County Sheriff's Office alone reported 10 wrecks on Interstate 84 near Boardman on Sunday. The first crash came at 4:03 p.m. when a vehi-

cle hit a guardrail at milepost 153 on the eastbound side of the freeway. And at 6:12 p.m. an eastbound car ran off the interstate near Boardman, rolled and came to a stop in the median.

An ambulance took one person from that crash to Good Shepherd Medical Center, Hermiston. Ambulances transported others from crashes as the night went on.

The most serious appeared to happen around 11:40 p.m. when an eastbound vehicle rolled and also ended up in the median. Bulletins stated ambulances transported more than one patient to Good Shepherd.

