

# Locals get primer on immigration rights

By **PHIL WRIGHT**  
STAFF WRITER

Do Dreamers have to worry about deportation from the United States? Do undocumented immigrants have constitutional rights?

Members of the Walla Walla Immigration Rights Coalition answered those and other tricky questions Saturday at a forum in Hermiston. Abigail Scholard said the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals only “de-prioritizes people for deportation,” but does not free Dreamers from deportation.

In simple terms, she said, individuals participating in DACA are not at the top of the deportation list, but they remain on the list. Those individuals, known as Dreamers, are undocumented immigrants who were brought into the United States as children. Many of them do not remember any other home, but can’t apply for citizenship or permanent residency due to the fact that their parents did not follow legal immigration channels to bring them here.

Scholar and fellow coalition member Eugenio Rojas said due process remains a constitutional right for undocumented immigrants. The U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement — ICE — too often tramples on due process when it rounds up people for deportation, they said, and that’s a constitutional violation.

Scholar added being in the U.S. illegally is a civil violation, not a criminal one.

More than 30 locals — some white, most Latino — gathered for the three-hour forum at the St. John’s Episcopal Church. Jesse Roa with the Tri-Cities Immigrant Coalition organized the event. He said he grew up in Hermiston, where the immigrant community can feel isolated and plenty of its

members feel fear, which in part drives people to these events. He said similar communities exist from La Grande to the Tri-Cities in Washington, and these gatherings are about unifying people and urging them to action.

“We are a community,” he told the crowd. “Maybe it’s time to start acting like it.”

Kenzie Spooner with the Walla Walla group said the notion that people can’t do anything is the misconception she most wanted to dispel. She said she started coming to meetings to learn more, and now she is a member of the group and can contribute.

“In fact, there is a lot everyone can do,” she said.

Kathleen Cathey helped drive home that point. She is the Eastern Oregon representative for Democratic U.S. Sen. Ron Wyden. Cathey said Wyden was in Hermiston in 2013 for a town hall meeting, and members of Hermiston’s Hispanic Advisory Committee and local Latinos packed the place. All those bodies shifted the conversation to immigration reform, which remains one of the senator’s top priorities.

She encouraged participants to likewise mobilize and have their friends and family speak up at Wyden’s open town halls in Oregon. She said that kind of action moves the conversation forward.

The Rev. Juli Reinholz of Pioneer United Methodist Church of Walla Walla was on hand. She said these forums are worth attending for the educational benefit alone.

Rojas at the end of the Walla Walla coalition’s presentation said people from all walks of life make up the United States, and whether someone arrived yesterday or has had family here for hundreds of years or more, the country is great already.

People need to know that, he said.



Jesse Roa



A Life Flight helicopter takes off from the scene of a single-vehicle rollover on the westbound Interstate 82 off-ramp at the interchange with Interstate 84 on Thursday west of Hermiston.

STAFF PHOTO BY E.J. HARRIS

# Two hospitalized after crash

By **JAYATI RAMAKRISHNAN**  
STAFF WRITER

Nine of the 11 people injured in a crash Thursday afternoon near Hermiston have been released from the hospital, according to Good Shepherd Medical Center and the church some of the victims attend.

The van was carrying members of a Lewiston youth group and crashed while traveling toward Portland on Interstate 82. The driver, Largent Reeb, 28, attempted to cross several lanes of traffic in order to merge onto Interstate 84 and lost control of the 2000 Ford Econoline, which slid off the north shoulder of the exit ramp and rolled.

Reeb was cited by Oregon State Police for failure to drive within a lane.

Oregon State Police Sgt. Seth Cooney said around 1 p.m., the van was traveling eastbound on I-82, and was approaching I-84.

“They were in the fast lane, but they needed to go westbound, so the driver attempted to swerve from the fast lane to make the exit. He lost control of the van, slid off the north shoulder of the exit ramp, and rolled one and a half revolutions,” Cooney said.

According to the Oregon State Police crash report, two passengers were ejected, and five were trapped and had to be cut out of the vehicle. Nine

were taken to Good Shepherd Medical Center, Hermiston, and two were flown to Kadlec Regional Medical Center, Richland.

Other than Reeb, the passengers ranged from ages 14 to 20.

An employee of River City Church in Lewiston said in a Facebook message to the Herald on Friday that one of the victims was still in the ICU recovering from surgery, but said that in the interest of their members’ privacy, they could not comment further on the condition of those injured.

Nick Bejarano of Good Shepherd said that several of the youth, as well as Reeb, were brought to the emergency room with

varying degrees of injuries. While they were being treated, he said, Good Shepherd staff set up a private space for families of the passengers, as well as passengers who did not have major injuries.

Reeb, who did not return a request for comment, posted on Facebook thanking Good Shepherd employees for their care.

“The staff and everyone here at Good Shepherd not only were so amazing at their jobs, they set up a whole conference room with food and drinks for all the families and other youth not injured and took such good care of our group medically but also beyond that,” Reeb wrote.

# Tensions rise as new delays expected on depot transfer

By **JADE MCDOWELL**  
STAFF WRITER

The Oregon National Guard has its portion of the former Umatilla Chemical Depot, but nobody knows when the rest of the property will be transferred to local control for economic development.

Frustration was palpable on a meeting via conference call between members of the Columbia Development Authority board (made up of representatives from Umatilla County, Morrow County, the Port of Umatilla, Port of Morrow and Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation) as they discussed additional roadblocks that have come up.

“It just continues to be one lost opportunity after another,” board member Kim Puzey said, referring to interested developers who have gone elsewhere due to the delays.

The U.S. Army’s Base Realignment and Closure office was at one point expected to transfer land to the CDA for industrial and agricultural development and a wildlife preserve in 2013, but that deadline has

since moved several times, most recently to November 2018.

During Tuesday’s meeting, however, CDA director Greg Smith reported that the Environmental Protection Agency had changed its mind and decided to require a Class A permit for hazardous waste disposal under the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act. Smith said he thought that process would likely create a four to seven month delay.

Tom Lederle of the Army’s BRAC office was more optimistic, saying he thought they could work on the RCRA permit at the same time as other outstanding issues with the transfer and it would not create a long delay.

“We were very surprised when the EPA made this demand at the 11th and a half hour,” he said.

Michele Lanigan, also of BRAC, said they had made a plan for permits with the state three years ago and the EPA had been on board with it, but a recent personnel change in the EPA’s Region 10 had seemed to prompt the change in direction.

Lederle said sometimes

people look at something like the depot transfer and decide it’s so important it needs more public process.

“There’s been a public process for 29 years. Don’t tell me it needs more,” Gary Neal replied. “How many more years does it need?”

“Probably 100 years, at the rate we’re going,” someone on the call remarked.

Smith said he planned to take a trip to Washington, D.C. on March 11 to lobby on behalf of the CDA, and he would work to find the “highest person in the EPA I can get” to meet with and ask for help in speeding along the process.

The CDA has also been facing delays over the programmatic agreement, which deals with cultural and historical preservation. The former depot contains areas of historical significance, such as a piece of the Oregon Trail, as well as areas of religious and cultural significance to the tribes. Smith said he was trying to find a “fair and reasonable” way to balance those concerns with maintaining the CDA’s ability to develop portions of the depot for industrial use as agreed upon years ago.

“I think there is a compromise that can be reached, but it really requires everyone to come to the middle,” he said. “If we dig in our heels I think we’re going to come to an impasse.”

The Oregon Military Department’s 7,500 acre portion of the 19,728-acre depot was transferred to the department in November for creation of an Oregon National Guard training facility, but the remainder of the land is still under the Army until the transfer to the CDA takes place.

# Mark Gomolski enters council race

By **JADE MCDOWELL**  
STAFF WRITER

Mark Gomolski has added his name to the list of candidates for Hermiston City Council.

Gomolski, a current school board member for the Hermiston School District, is running for Ward I. Councilor Lori Davis, who currently holds the seat, has not announced yet whether she will run again.

Gomolski ran for an at-large seat on the council in 2015 against a field of four incumbents but did not win.

He said he was troubled by the “non-inclusion of residents” he was seeing as the city council made major decisions like taking sole ownership of the Eastern Oregon Trade and Event Center.

“I dislike decisions being made without public input until after the deed is done,” he said.

He said if elected he

would push for more public involvement with city decisions. He said he also had concerns about EOTEC he wanted to address.

Currently the school board and city council both meet on the second and fourth Monday of the month, forcing people to choose between the two meetings.

Gomolski said if elected and serving in both capacities he thought it would be a good opportunity for one body or the other to change their meeting dates so that citizens could attend both if they wanted.

“I think a lot of people would like to go to both,” he said.

Gomolski said he was also troubled by youth suicides in the community and would like to see both the school district and the city tackle that issue.

The deadline to file for city council is 5 p.m. March 6.



Mark Gomolski

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