Drug court gets another chance

By PHIL WRIGHT STAFF WRITER

Drug court's return to Umatilla County could take another step forward Wednesday.

Dale Primmer, director of Umatilla County Community Justice Department, is asking the county board of commissioners to approve having Community Counseling Solutions provide treatment for drug court participants. The board will consider the request during it regular meeting Wednesday.

Having a treatment provider is a crucial step to bringing back drug court.

Community Justice operated the program until state funding declined last vear. Since then, Primmer said, his department has worked with the circuit courts of the 6th Judicial District and others to find a way to restart the program. The next iteration plans to use a post-conviction but pre-sentencing model, so offenders can work through treatment to receive less severe

sentences or even have the court dismiss charges. The state courts and the local public safety coordinating council will oversee the drug court.

Primmer said Community Justice sought bids for a treatment provider, and Community Counseling Solutions, which offers behavioral health services in Morrow, Wheeler, Gilliam, and Grant counties, came up with a proposal to take on the job.

Under the plan, Community Counseling Solutions will hire two full-time certified alcohol and drug counselors and a clinician/ program manger to provide drug court treatment in the 6th Judicial District, which encompasses Umatilla and Morrow counties. The clinician will work in Boardman, where the company has an office, and the counselors in Pendleton and Hermiston.

Community Counseling estimated a drug court services budget of \$596,000 from April 1, 2018 through June 30, 2019, including for travel and offices. That

drops to about \$536,000 if the county provides work space.

Insurance will cover some of the costs, but Primmer said that leaves a gap of about \$250,000, and the funds from the 2017-19 Oregon Justice Reinvestment Grant would fill that hole. The state provides those funds to programs that keep offenders out of prison.

The size of the gap depends on several factors, Primmer said, including the number of participants and insurance coverage. The Oregon Health Plan, for example, covers addiction treatment.

'So that amount won't be static," he said.

Drug court could commence as soon as July 1, and Primmer said that is probably a cautious approach to make sure all the pieces are in place. State courts are writing the polices and procedures for drug court, and Community Counseling Solutions would have to hire the staff and get them up to speed on the program.



STAFF PHOTO BY E.J. HARRIS

Station director Phil Hamm gives a tour of the greenhouse facilities at the HAREC to U.S. Rep. Greg Walden an Oregon Sen. Bill Hansell on Wednesday outside of Hermiston.

Walden tours upgraded station

By JADE MCDOWELL STAFF WRITER

After the 2018 federal spending bill secured more than \$3 billion in funding for agricultural research, Rep. Greg Walden got to see some of that work firsthand last week at the Hermiston Agricultural Research and Extension Center.

Walden got a tour of the center last Wednesday as part of a trip through Umatilla County. Director Phil Hamm, as enthusiastic as ever in his promotion of the experiment station, showed off insect-raising rooms, soil testing labs, greenhouses, bee research and more.

"In your district you have the best experiment station anywhere," Hamm told the congressman.

After making sure everyone — even University of Oregon Ducks fans like Walden and state senator Bill Hansell - had on their very own Oregon State University Beavers baseball cap, Hamm showed Walden about \$1 million in improvements made to HAREC since Walden's last trip out to the station a couple of years earlier. Cam Preus, president of Blue Mountain Community College, also touted the multi-million dollar precision irrigated agriculture facility the college built on the HAREC campus last year to give students hands-on training with things like maintaining the station's 15 center pivots.

made to the station in recent years includes the remodel of some research labs, solar panels that save the station about \$30,000 per year on their electrical bill, two new crop circles and the Don Horneck Memorial Building, which includes an agronomy lab and insect-rearing rooms. Currently in the works is also an expansion of the plant pathology lab and new conference room.

Hamm said the improvements are thanks to generous support from farmers and other stakeholders in the area, who are unmatched around the state in their support for the extension center.

"No one, absolutely no one, can come close to the support we get from our stakeholders," Hamm said.

He said later in the year HAREC plans to hold a "thank you day" during which they will add new names to the list of supporters on a large stone outside the front office. Hamm said Walden's name will be on that list for his work to remove a federal reversionary clause that had previously stipulated that the land where HAREC sits would revert to the federal government if any part of it were ever used for something other than agricultural research. Preus, during her part of the tour, told Walden that without the change to the reversionary clause the partnership with BMCC and HAREC to build the precision ag building on the HAREC campus would not have been possible. She said not only are fulltime students able to get a

good hands-on education on precision irrigation, but BMCC also uses the building to hold "compressed" workshops where people from the agricultural industry can get training on changes to the industry over two full days instead of a series of hour-long classes in a semester.

"The industry folks really like that," she said.

Hamm added that HAREC and BMCC hope someday people will come from all over the world, not just the Pacific Northwest, to learn about precision irrigated agriculture in an arid climate. Carl Melle, dean of career technical education for the college, said they were also planning to begin a series of Wednesday morning workshops for high school students interested in pursuing a career in agriculture.

Walden said he was pleased that the federal omnibus spending bill had increased the amount of funding for agricultural research from the previous year.

"It's so important, the work you do, and the work they do across the state," he said.

Later that day Walden

April means spring cleaning

By JADE MCDOWELL STAFF WRITER

It's spring cleaning month in Hermiston.

"Clean-sweep" events the next three weeks offer opportunities to get rid of junk, weeds and litter community-wide before code enforcement takes notice.

"We have three components, none of which are new, but they're enhanced," parks and recreation director Larry Fetter said.

The first is Sanitary Disposal's clean-up week, which runs April 1-7. Umatilla County residents can dump loads up to 454.5 pounds and 2.5 cubic yards free, excluding tires. Cash customers can receive \$14 off larger loads. The loads can be dropped off from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday and 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday. The transfer station is two miles north of Hermiston at 81144 N. Highway 395. For information, call Sanitary Disposal at 541-567-8842.

Saturday, April 14 at Umatilla Electric Cooperative, 750 W. Elm Avenue.

"We're taking all the standard recyclable items we've taken in the past, the bulk of which are tires," Fetter said.

This year, however, tires do not have to be separated from rims before dropoff. Other items collected include appliances, electronics, glass, metal, untreated wood with no nails in it, latex and oil-based paints, newspaper, cardboard and batteries. For items like motor oil and sensitive documents that need shredding, which the city won't take that day, they will provide information about where those

Assembly of God as a series of service projects, other churches have since signed on. The April 21 clean-up event is open to anyone who wants to help. Participants are invited to show up at 9 a.m. at McKenzie Park.

"Anyone can show up, and if they're looking for a job to do they can check in at the big tent," Fetter said.

The group will be divided into six teams that will each be given a zone to clean up. Zones will be along North First Place and the railroad tracks, on the west side of Highway 395 between Elm Avenue and Jennie Avenue, and four downtown zones stretching from Highland

For recyclable items, all Umatilla County residents can take advantage of the city's free recycling event can be disposed of.

Once people have taken care of the junk on their own properties, they're invited to help clean up public property around town on Saturday, April 21.

Fetter said the "I Love My City" activity should be the biggest yet. Current estimates show about 400 people are expected to participate in the clean-up day.

While I Love My City was started by Hermiston Avenue to Gladys Avenue.

Each zone will be given specific tasks, including picking up litter, weeding, scrubbing graffiti and removing leaves and other debris piled along the sides of buildings.

He said graffiti has been a problem in Hermiston recently and he hopes people will help police catch the vandals and that people will let the city know about graffiti in public parks so they can remove it quickly.

"We've got to get those students hands on, that's how they learn," she said.

A few improvements

visited Pendleton, where he discussed rural school funding with county officials and the opioid crisis with Sheriff Terry Rowan.



BRIEF

Officers investigate shooting of car near **Newport Park**

Hermiston police are investigating a shooting that took place near Newport Park on March 27.

According to Police Chief Jason Edmiston, officers responded at 8:27 p.m. to reports of gunshots near Newport Park. Once they arrived at Northeast Sixth Street and East Hurlburt Avenue, they found a dark-colored Honda sedan with several bullet holes in it.

"Preliminary investigation found that three occupants were in an argument with a male in a light-colored SUV," Edmiston said. "The argument continued with one of the three males



fled the scene." believe the male in the SUV WE HEAR YOU!

The male in the SUV pulled a firearm and the three males Edmiston said officers

breaking out the back win-

dow of the SUV with a bat.

Honda and shot at it numerous times. They found shell casings

pulled up to the unoccupied

near the Honda, and the SUV fled the area.

Edmiston said they have

made contact with people involved in the incident, but did not say how many.

He would not disclose whether officers knew the relationship between the two parties.

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