



Firefighters work on the Wilson Prairie fire in south Morrow County.

PHOTO CONTRIBUTED BY NWC18

A 'thank you' to firefighters

By **JADE MCDOWELL**
STAFF WRITER

When it seems like the entire state is on fire, it's only natural that people want to show their support to the firefighters working to keep the flames at bay.

Christie Shaw of the Oregon Department of Forestry said simple thank-yous are often enough. Personnel working on the Wilson Prairie fire in south Morrow County have mentioned community members and tourists thanking them at a local restaurant, and crews on large wildfires will often see hand-written signs posted in communities thanking them for their service.

"I know that's meaningful to them," she said.

Families displaced by wildfires often need supplies as they wait out in the fire and in some cases find they have no home to return to. Firefighters on large wildland fires, on the other hand, are "fully com-

pensated and supported" for their work, including water and meals at the fire camp that the Department of Forestry has budgeted for.

Shaw said while firefighters "love to feel that they're valued," it tends to make more sense to check in with smaller rural fire departments — which often run on volunteers — with more limited budgets to ask if there is anything they need help with, rather than dropping off donations unannounced at government-run fire camps. One year, for example, a community ended up dropping off "crates and crates of socks" to a fire camp even though firefighters were well-stocked with socks already.

Danny Palomino of Hermiston is trying to go the rural support route by starting a Facebook page called "Watch my 6 I got yours" this week. He said he hopes to serve as a focal point for people to drop off donations they want to give, and

then he can contact agencies in Umatilla and Morrow counties and see if they are running low on any of those supplies, instead of a stream of community members dropping by fire stations unannounced.

"It's been pretty horrible with all of these fires lately, and I know people want to help but they feel helpless," he said.

He said he traveled to the Eagle Creek fire in the Columbia Gorge last summer to drop off Gold Bond, baby wipes and "pocket snacks" but had a lot of difficulty getting through to deliver them, which is why he thought coordinating with local fire departments was a better route.

Umatilla County Fire District 1 operations chief Jim Forquer said the district has had to turn down some offers of support lately, but he hoped people understood it was because the district was incredibly busy and not because they weren't grateful.

"We're really appreciative of our relationship with the community," he said. "It doesn't go unnoticed."

Forquer said the public can be a huge help to firefighters by paying attention while driving and getting out of the way quickly when a truck or ambulance comes through with lights and sirens.

He said the very biggest thing people can do to support the fire district was to stay safe — including precautions such as wearing life jackets and staying hydrated — and do everything in their power to prevent fires.

"We've had several fires where folks weren't following the burn ban, and that creates an additional work load," he said.

Police say Hermiston shooting suspect bit officer on thumb

HERMISTON HERALD

Alex Luis Ahumada of Boardman pleaded not guilty on Aug. 1 to assault and other charges stemming from the shooting of a man in May in Hermiston. He also faces new charges for biting a Pendleton officer while naked.

Pendleton police Lt. Charles Byram said officers on July 28 responded to a report of stranger banging on the door, yelling and acting erratic. Officers spotted the suspect in a field behind the C M Sausage Co. at 1140 Tutuilla Road near Southwest Marshall Avenue in Pendleton.

Ahumada was naked, Byram said, under the influence of some substance and in a state of "excited delirium." Police tried to detain Ahumada, and one officer recognized him because there was a warrant for his arrest.

"Then the fight was on," Byram said. "It took four officers just to get him under control, and during the confrontation he bit one of the officers."

The victim was J.D. Lambert, and the injury was to his thumb. He went back to work after receiving medical treatment.

Police hauled Ahumada to St. Anthony Hospital, Pendleton, due to his intoxicated state. Byram said officers kept a watch on him there until Aug. 1, when they booked him into the Umatilla County Jail, Pendleton, on multiple charges, including resisting arrest, interfering with police, attempted escape and assaulting a police officer.

Ahumada, 33, was in Umatilla County Cir-

cuit Court, Hermiston on Aug. 1 to face charges of first-degree assault, two counts of unlawful use of a weapon and one count of felon in possession of a firearm. The state alleged Ahumada on May 19 shot and injured Carlos Antonio Ramirez, 27, of Hermiston. Police first captured Ahumada on May 23 after he barricaded himself inside a Boardman home.

"It took four officers just to get him under control, and during the confrontation he bit one of the officers."

Lt. Charles Byram,
Pendleton police

The grand jury handed up the assault charges stemming from the shooting July 26 after hearing from police and other witnesses, including Ramirez, according to the indictment.

Circuit Judge Dan Hill set Ahumada's bail at \$500,000. The next hearing in the case is Aug. 13.

Court records also show Ramirez has two cases pending in Umatilla County for second-degree theft. The state alleges Ramirez stole merchandise worth \$100 or more from the Hermiston Walmart on June 23, July 7 and July 10.

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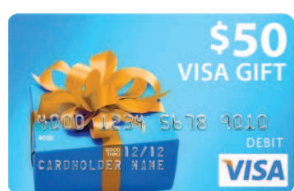
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