

Employers, hospital add new tools to reduce job-related pain

By **JADE MCDOWELL**
STAFF WRITER

Work can be pain in the neck. Or back. Or feet.

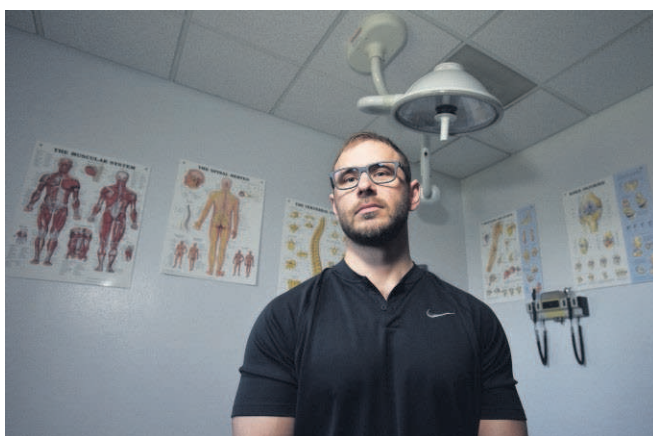
Employees in physically demanding industries, such as manufacturing and shipping, can be particularly vulnerable to injury, and Good Shepherd Health Care System in Hermiston is hoping to better address the needs of the many area residents who work in those industries.

Good Shepherd spokesman Nick Bejarano said the hospital is working on a comprehensive pain management program that will eventually feature behavioral health, acupuncture, massage therapy, physical therapy and more.

"They can begin working on a plan of action to get people back to work and to the lifestyle they're accustomed to," he said.

The hospital's first move was to hire chiropractor Christopher Scott about a year ago. Scott said he sees many patients who have job-related pain. Sometimes it's an older patient whose body is breaking down after years of physical labor, and other times it's an acute injury that happened when someone lifted something.

"There's a lot of physicality in what these guys do," he said.



STAFF PHOTO BY E.J. HARRIS

Chiropractor Christopher Scott has been seeing patients for about a year for the Good Shepherd Healthcare System in Hermiston. Scott is just the first recruitment is Good Shepherd's first step in a plan to develop a comprehensive pain-management program.

Patients who come in to see Scott get a work-up of X-rays and other diagnostic tests before Scott works with them on addressing the "biomechanical" causes of their pain. He performs hands-on manipulations but also teaches patients about exercises they can do at home to build core strength and help prevent future injuries.

Preventing injuries

Companies have their own programs that they hope will prevent employees from being injured in the first place. At the Walmart Distribution Center in Hermiston, manager Josh Burns said his duty is to make sure associates go home safely every

day.

One way he does that is through a program called Axonify. At least once a week employees log into one of the work stations around the distribution center and answer a series of questions about how to do their particular job safely. Afterward, they get to choose from a selection of computer games to play. They can challenge other employees and compare high scores.

"It's a little more fun than at our meetings reminding people of a list of rules," Burns said.

The company also had an ergonomics specialist come in and teach them a series of stretches for each type of

work, designed to prevent injury. An associate from each department leads their team in stretches daily.

Physical preparation is important when some employees are manually moving as many as 10,000 boxes per day.

Burns said there are a variety of other ways Walmart seeks to keep its associates safe, including regular analysis of data. If the company can see a spike in shoulder injuries at a certain time of year, they will look at what might be contributing to the problem and how to mitigate it.

Another of Hermiston's largest employers, Lamb Weston, also has safety programs in place to protect employees.

Tony Campbell, director of safety and health, said he has seen a lot of improvements to employee health and safety over his 17 years with the company. At their Richland plant, for example, Campbell said they're now over a year without an OSHA-recordable injury.

"We've really drastically reduced our incident rate," he said.

Lamb Weston has internal focus groups and audits geared toward improving safety for each job, and like Walmart, has worked with ergonomics specialists to

build a program of stretches, joint-strengthening exercises, posture-building movements and activities to increase stability while walking on wet surfaces.

Not only do the exercises help with employee wellness, but Campbell said it also gives team leaders an opportunity to spot if an employee seems extra tired or distracted.

"That's when they say, 'Maybe today is not the day to have Tony up on a ladder,'" he said.

Lamb Weston has also increased automation for some of its more physically demanding jobs, and Campbell said they have developed a workflow that rotates workers through multiple tasks throughout the day so they're not repeating the same motion over and over for the whole shift.

Addressing injuries

From a chiropractor's perspective, Scott said that jobs are hardest on the body when they involve being in the same position throughout the entire work day.

The healthiest practice, he said, is for humans to have a good mixture of sitting, standing and lying down during a 24-hour period.

Too much sitting or standing or lifting can cause prob-

lems ranging from sprains to herniated disks. Scott said he addresses the immediate problem causing pain or limited movement, but also teaches the patients how to change their movement patterns at work.

Manufacturing and shipping aren't the only physical jobs that causes injuries — Scott said he sees a lot of farmers. And working at a business like a tire shop can be particularly demanding because it combines lifting heavy tires and standing on hard concrete floors all day.

"It's hard on your body," he said.

Scott said when he sees people in physical jobs that are experiencing pain, often their job has built up certain muscles but overall they aren't that healthy. They might be overweight, or eating a lot of junk food that increases inflammation, or not getting any cardio — all risk factors.

Poor mental health can play a contributing role as well, he said.

Reversing those habits through healthy eating, exercise and addressing mental health problems — can help people better manage or avoid job-related pain. And when that isn't enough, Good Shepherd will continue recruiting providers who can provide other methods for treating injuries.

Trucking talk covers growing pot industry

By **PHIL WRIGHT**
STAFF WRITER

The nation's changing attitude on marijuana poses a quandary for the trucking industry. The Oregon Trucking Association is trying to help transportation companies deal with that change.

Waylon Buchan is the director of government affairs for the Oregon Trucking Association. He addressed a couple dozen trucking company human resource directors, supervisors and the like on marijuana policy during the association's symposium last week at Wildhorse Resort & Casino near Pendleton. Legal marijuana is big business, he said, with Oregon projecting more than \$22 million in tax revenue from marijuana sales in 2019.

"When this gets to the \$100 million point, that's real money," he said.

That economic green means government is not stepping in to roll back the progress on pot. Former U.S. Attorney General Jeff Sessions was adamantly opposed to marijuana, Buchan said, but made few moves to step on what states did with legalizing the substance. And state after state is moving in that direction.



HH FILE PHOTO

Semi-trucks park in Stanfield.

According to New Frontier Data, which tracks the cannabis industry, only Idaho, South Dakota and Kansas will not offer some kind of legal marijuana market within the next decade, and the legal marijuana industry by 2025 looks to employ more than 1 million people.

All of that is going to affect trucking and transportation, Buchan said, and the industry abides by U.S. Department of Transportation and federal laws, which prohibits marijuana. Even a doctor's note allowing a truck driver to use pot, he said, will not supersede the prohibition, and case law has already decided that issue.

But that does not mean companies have an easy

out to create anti-marijuana policy.

"We already have a critical driver shortage," Buchan said, along with mechanics and related positions. Thus a strict anti-marijuana policy could send would-be employees to seek another job.

Still, he said, companies should follow what the federal transportation department mandates when it comes to drivers, and companies must be consistent with enforcing their own marijuana policies. He also let the crowd know more marijuana changes could be on the horizon.

The next session of Congress is looking at 41 bills dealing with marijuana — 27 in the House and 14 in the Senate.

Pet fosters open their homes

By **PHIL WRIGHT**
STAFF WRITER

Tater stiffened her short, stout body, stood her ground and barked. She is 9, can't see well and is a tad hard of hearing, but Lulu already was barking, so Tater joined right in.

Susan Goodnow of Pendleton, her voice rising just enough over the dogs, told them both to settle down. Not that it did much. Lulu, a Catahoula, is Goodnow's pet. Tater is one of the two dogs Goodnow is fostering for the Pendleton Animal Welfare Shelter. The Chihuahua-mix looks like a big baked potato when she lays down, Goodnow said, so Tater it was. Pepper, a bearded collie, is the other foster dog and stayed in a back bedroom out of sight. Both came from difficult lives.

"You know, they are just waiting for the perfect home," Goodnow said.

Goodnow, retired, said she dog sat for friends and neighbors and about a decade ago that led to fostering dogs. She estimated she has fostered around 100 dogs.

"I've always had dogs," Goodnow said. "At one point I didn't have dogs for two months. It made me crazy."

Like PAWS, Hermiston's Fuzz Ball Animal Rescue also relies on multiple local and regional fosters. Robin



STAFF PHOTO BY KATHY ANEY
Susan Goodnow's Catahoula dog, Lulu, takes the presence of two foster dogs in the house in stride.

Barker, volunteer with Fuzz Ball, fosters dogs herself.

"Without fosters, we cannot continue to run the rescue," she said.

Fuzz Ball has 16 animals in six foster homes, Barker said, and the nonprofit can use more help. But people are reluctant to foster pets during the holidays. She said people new to fostering have to commit to keeping a pet as long as necessary, and they need a home appropriate for the pet. Dogs that run need fenced yards, for example, and someone willing to take kittens cannot let them stay outdoors.

Goodnow has fostered dogs for as little as a day and as long as a year. Tater came into the Pendleton Animal Welfare Shelter in late summer after living in a home with unsanitary and

even dangerous conditions, but she was in heat. That's not a good situation for an animal shelter, so Goodnow took her in, and she has been adjusting.

"She's looking for a nice home with an old lady," Goodnow said. "She gets up on the bed at night and under the covers and keeps my feet warm."

Rolling with unpredictable behavior is key to fostering pets, she said, but so is careful observation. Fosters have to learn how one pet interacts with another pet, with adults, with children, how a dog tells it's scared or wants out.

"By having a dog in your home, you can discover its behaviors," Goodnow said. "You can get a better idea of how to describe a dog to the potential family."

Goodnow also said folks have to understand the role of fosters.

"You get in your mindset you're helping the dogs find good, permanent homes," she said. "The dogs you're fostering do not belong to you."

Fuzz Ball and the Pendleton Animal Welfare Shelter have foster pet applications online at <http://www.fuzzballrescue.com/> and <http://pendletonpaws.org/>. You also can email Fuzz Ball at fuzzballrescue@gmail.com, and PAWS is available at 541-278-0181. The two nonprofits also are on Facebook.

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