



Staff photo by Jayati Ramakrishnan

**Junior Ortega chats with a customer as they drive through the 395 Quick Stop.**

**QUICK STOP**

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said. "It's so convenient. I hated dragging my kids into a gas station."

They enjoy the corn and Takis with cheese, as well as the interaction with the store's employees.

"It's fun that they do trivia and give away drinks," she said.

"We keep it pretty simple," Ortega said. "You take care of the people who take care of you."

He also interacts with his customers regularly on Facebook, Snapchat, Instagram and Twitter, posting multiple times a day, with specials and trivia questions that customers can answer when they

drive through. The business's Facebook page has amassed more than 5,000 likes.

"Social media is my cup of tea," he said.

A week before Christmas he posted a poll, asking customers which of the store's three employees they'd like to see dressed up as Santa Claus while they worked the next weekend. Customers, of course, chose Ortega, so he donned a St. Nick suit for the weekend as he worked.

"Our customers are what make the whole idea fun," he said. "I'm really big on relationships, and I'm pretty happy with what we've put together in the past five years."

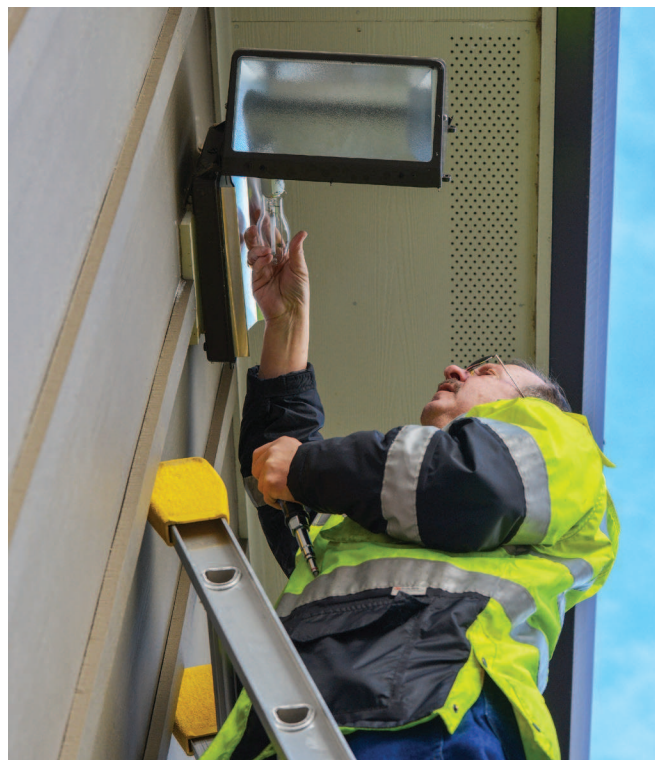
**TEMP**

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Express, a national service with multiple branches in Oregon, is one of a few staffing agencies in Umatilla County. Other employment services include Worksource Eastern Oregon, which includes some public and private agencies, as well as some agricultural staffing agencies such as Atkinson Staffing.

Connell said Express currently has about 213 active associates and about 53 business clients to whom they supply workers. Clients include large manufacturers as well as small companies with just two or three clients. About 75 percent of their clients are businesses that involve some sort of physical labor, like manufacturing, agriculture, construction or food processing. The other 25 are administrative roles, including office jobs with agricultural or manufacturing companies.

During a conversation that usually lasts no more than an hour, employment specialists will find out as much as they can about the person's desired job, such as minimum pay, how much they want to work and how far they're willing to commute (Express covers clients in Umatilla and Morrow counties). They discuss the person's skills, things they do or don't want to do, and their work history. Applicants are given a conditional offer of employment with Express, which then seeks out jobs for them.



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

**Maintenance supervisor David Pichuskie replaces a light bulb in a security light at the Boardman Trails Apartments on Thursday in Boardman.**

The employee's relationship with Express could last anywhere from a few months to several years.

"Some associates only want temp work," Connell said. "Some client partners don't ever hire our employees, and they keep them on our payroll forever."

Some associates have done temp work through the agency for two or three years, Connell said.

With lower unemployment numbers, the applicant pool gets less varied, said Connell, and they see more applicants with the same skill sets.

"The types of people

we're seeing, we already have 20 just like them," she said. "Maybe they're entry-level, not a lot of skills."

Skills, she said, can include forklift operators or refrigeration technicians, or someone with office skills, like bilingual administrative assistants.

"Those people aren't necessarily looking for work; they're already employed," she said.

The average wage for jobs through Express is currently \$15.09 an hour, Connell said.

The majority of the associates who come in seeking jobs are recently laid off or

have just moved to the area, but there are a few retired people who will take seek out temp jobs, looking for variety.

David Pichuskie is one of those people. The Stanfield resident was an associate of Express Employment services for nearly two years, working temporary jobs around Umatilla County before settling on a permanent job this summer, managing apartment complexes for Umatilla County Housing Authority.

Those temp jobs included working as a flagger with the railroad, filling out orders and distributing food for CAPECO, and driving a forklift for Dupont Pioneer.

Pichuskie had owned a business for several years, but when he retired, he wanted something that would allow him some flexibility.

"I don't think I've turned down any job," he said, adding that he's enjoyed most of the work, though there are a few jobs he'd prefer not to do again.

"Like emptying a rail car filled with coal dust — by hand," he said.

Pichuskie said the range of jobs taught him about dealing with different industries, as well as Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) guidelines.

"You learn a lot when you're bouncing from place to place," he said.

Pichuskie said people who want to keep working have to be willing to broaden their scope.

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