

Rooftop rescue adds fuel to friendly police-firefighter rivalry

By **JADE MCDOWELL**
NEWS EDITOR

Payback was as sweet as the irony on Friday morning when a Hermiston police officer needed rescuing from a roof.

Just a week earlier, the Hermiston Police Department had poked fun at the neighboring Umatilla County Fire District 1 on Facebook, asking people to not leave valuables in plain sight in their vehicles so that “we have more time to help Umatilla County Fire District #1 get cats out of trees.”

So when the call came through dispatch asking for assistance for an officer who had climbed onto the roof of O’Reilly Auto Parts to look for a trespasser, the fire district was delighted to bring a ladder truck — and post plenty of pictures to Facebook.

“Took a break from our busy day of saving cats out of trees to help one of our fellow brothers in blue!” they posted, joking that the officer had been pursuing a person throwing donuts. “Not only did we safely rescue him from his precarious position atop a frigid rooftop

but he was able to live out a life long dream of being a firefighter.”

Candice Slagel-Osborne, administrative assistant for the fire district, said as soon as she got the call from dispatch, she knew the rest of the UCFD staff would get a laugh. The district probably didn’t need to bring out as many rigs or personnel as they did, but Lt. Jeff Armstrong said they couldn’t resist the opportunity.

“They’ve been poking fun at us on Facebook, so we thought we’d return the favor,” he said.

Police Chief Jason Edmiston said Cpl. Riley Studebaker and Sgt. Bill Osborne responded about 8:30 a.m. to the auto parts store for a call of a trespasser on the roof. Studebaker quickly climbed a ladder on site to check out the roof and found some personal belongings but no people.

The ladder he had used to get up was pretty “wobbly,” Edmiston said, and the department has already had too many injuries this year. So Osborne told Studebaker to stay on the roof until the fire district could provide a safer way down — which led to the Facebook post.

“They got us,” Edmiston said.

The police department started the friendly little Facebook rivalry, the chief admitted, when they shared a post asking people to support UCFD’s participation in the March 10 Leukemia & Lymphoma Society stair climb fundraiser but added, “Not only does it raise money for a great cause, it will give our firefighters a chance to exchange truck washing tips, recipes, and video game cheat codes with hose draggers from all over.” They followed up with the job about cat rescues the next day, and the fire department responded with a meme about police officers’ real dream of being a firefighter.

The two departments share a building at 330 S. First St., which can lead to some friendly teasing, Edmiston said, but in all seriousness, both departments get along well and always have each others’ back. He said the teamwork during Wednesday’s fire alarm at Hermiston High School, when UCFD showed up to ascertain there was no fire and HPD showed up to make sure there wasn’t a threat, shows that.

“Everyone is in sync,” he said.



Contributed photo by Umatilla County Fire District #1

Hermiston Police Cpl. Riley Studebaker climbs down a ladder truck from the roof of O’Reilly Auto Parts after climbing on the roof to check for a reported trespasser.

Hermiston girl killed in Olympia car crash

By **JAYATI RAMAKRISHNAN**
STAFF WRITER

Family and friends of Natalya Martinez are still finding ways to process what happened this weekend, but they were anything but speechless when it came to describing the 16-year-old, who died in a car wreck on Saturday.

“Everyone knew Natalya as this sassy diva, but she always wanted the best for everyone,” said her sister Marissa Navejar.

They described the Hermiston High School junior as an animal lover with a loud laugh and a passion for cheerleading and travel, who had dreams of becoming a nurse someday. “She was a beautiful soul,” Marissa said. “She put all of her effort into school. She had a lot of plans.”

On Saturday, Martinez and her mother were traveling to Seattle to meet family to attend a KISS concert. Her mother, Dianna Navejar, said that she got a flat tire on I-5 near Olympia, and because the freeway was so busy, they decided to get the vehicle towed instead of changing the tire on the side of the road.

“She was a beautiful soul. She put all of her effort into school. She had a lot of plans.”

Marissa Navejar, sister

Dianna’s brother, David, and her son were in another car, and pulled over behind them to wait for the tow truck. The four were waiting in David’s car together.

“Next thing I know, they were waking me up, trying to wake up Tal,” Dianna said. She described the whole back side of the car, a Nissan Altima, slammed in, and glass everywhere.

According to Washing-



Contributed photo by Marissa Navejar

Natalya Martinez, 16, of Hermiston, died in a car crash on Interstate 5 near Olympia on Saturday, Feb. 2.

ton State Patrol and reports by The Olympian newspaper, a Ford Focus hit the Altima and rolled. The driver of the Focus, David Willis of Poulsbo, Washington, is the subject of a criminal investigation. Willis, 40, faces charges of vehicular homicide and reckless endangerment, and is suspected of being impaired, although state patrol did not release whether drugs or alcohol were involved.

An 8-year-old girl was in the car with Willis and was transported to the hospital for injuries. According to *The Olympian*, Dianna was also transported with injuries. The other two occupants of the vehicle, Diana’s 14-year-old son and David, were not injured.

On Monday, Martinez’s family gathered at the home of her aunt, Sonia Nash. They laughed and teared

up as they recalled things about Natalya.

“She had already named all her future cats and dogs,” Marissa said. “I feel like now I have to adopt all the animals she would have adopted.”

They said Martinez loved cheerleading, and though a concussion had sidelined her the previous season, she had planned to return to the sport this year.

Marissa said the family is close-knit, and Martinez had been eagerly anticipating becoming an aunt later this spring, buying clothes for her brother’s child.

“She said she was going to be the best aunty in the world,” her mom said.

She had also been looking forward to the KISS concert — which had become something of a tradition with her uncle David. He had taken her to see the

band three times, and this time many family members were going.

“She was really excited — it was their last tour, and she was excited to have everyone together,” Marissa said.

Her grandmother, Josie Correa, said her granddaughter loved to tease people, but in good fun.

“She was always playing with me,” Correa said. “She was always giving me a hard time. I think it meant that she loved me.”

She loved photography and new places, and had plans to travel with her cousin this summer.

“Even when we were driving from Portland to Olympia, she was pointing out all the things she’d never seen before, places she wanted to come back to,” said Dianna.

“She was really good at being a girl,” Marissa said. “Hair, makeup, nails — I was always trying to get her to do mine. She would Facetime me after school to show me her makeup.”

In addition to Marissa, Martinez had two brothers, Jordan and Michael, her father, Mike, and several relatives and friends.

“We’ve been here our whole lives,” said Marissa. “It’s not just affecting people in Hermiston, but Stanfield, Pendleton, Tri-Cities.”

Correa said since Saturday, Martinez’s friends have sent them videos and photos of her.

“A lot of people cared about her — people we didn’t even know,” she said.

Marissa said a date has not yet been set, but they will have a service that will be open to all high school students or anyone who knew her.

Hermiston gets rolling on skate park design

By **JADE MCDOWELL**
NEWS EDITOR

When skateboarding debuts as an Olympic sport in Tokyo in 2020, the U.S. team will have trained at a facility designed by the same company designing Hermiston’s skate park.

California Skateparks, one of the world’s top skate park design companies, recently built the California Training Facility, an indoor training facility in Vista, California, that will serve as the training ground for the U.S. Olympic team, as well as other top professional skaters and foreign Olympic teams.

Last week, consultants from California Skateparks visited Hermiston for a workshop to discuss plans for a skate park the city plans to build across First Street from Hermiston’s police and fire station.

“We had about 30 interested people show up,” parks and recreation director Larry Fetter said. “Most of them were skaters of some sort.”

Participants watched a video exploring a concept design and rendering by DugOut Design Studio of Beaverton, a subcontractor for California Skateparks, of what Hermiston’s skate park could look like, using some of the most popular elements of skate parks worldwide. Afterward, they placed colored dots on a conceptual drawing to show what they liked best, and used their phones to take an online survey about the park. Fetter said the company will take about six weeks to shape the feedback into a new design,

which they will bring back for a second meeting before finalizing.

Elements the skaters liked best are filled with skateboarding jargon — top picks include a hubba, bank to ledge, pump track, snakerun, mini ramp bowl and brick banks. Fetter said some sections of the park can be dual-purpose, such as a “skateable” basketball court, a parkour obstacle course, and stairs/railings/benches that have a functional purpose as well as a skating one. Parts of the park will also be sheltered, and lighting will allow skaters to use the facility after dark.

“We got a lot of feedback, and really strong responses,” Fetter said, noting most attendees rated the overall design presented with a 4 or 5 out of 5.

The property where the park will be built encompasses about 1.5 acres across First Street from Hermiston Police Department and Umatilla County Fire District. The city owns about half an acre outright and controls the lease with Union Pacific Railroad for the rest.

Fetter said it’s the perfect location for a skate park. The police can help keep an eye on it, there aren’t any residential neighbors around to complain about late-night skating, and it is situated just a block from the high school. A fence will go up along the railroad to discourage anyone crossing into the park from that side, and Fetter said landscaping and other design elements will help the park blend in aesthetically with the Maxwell Pavilion next door.

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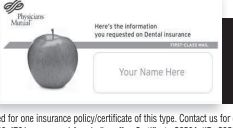
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