

The Alebrije brings tamales and more to Hermiston

By **JADE MCDOWELL**
NEWS EDITOR

The owners of Tacos Xavi have branched out.

Gabriela Rodriguez said the taco truck business will continue, but this week they also opened a brick-and-mortar restaurant known as The Alebrije. It is located at 230 S.W. 11th St. in Hermiston, next to the Last Chance Tavern.

"The opportunity came because we saw this was for renting, and my husband and I were thinking to do something different," Rodriguez said.

The large menu includes varieties of tamales, alambres, mariscos, chilaquiles, sopas, tacos and other home-style Mexican food. The owners are also applying for a liquor license.

For now The Alebrije is open from 10 a.m. to 9 p.m. seven days a week with the exception of Sundays, when the restaurant closes at

7 p.m. Rodriguez said they serve breakfast burritos in the mornings and hope to eventually start opening up earlier in the day.

The business is named after alebrijes, which are colorful creatures in Mexican folklore made up of elements from several animals. Alebrijes are featured in the popular children's movie "Coco." The Hermiston restaurant has several hand-carved wooden alebrije sculptures from Oaxaca and Rodriguez said one day they may start importing alebrijes to sell in the store.

The Alebrije opened this week in the newly remodeled and repainted building that until recently housed Tacos San Pedro. Rodriguez said the sit-down restaurant has had a good response so far from word of mouth and they hope word continues to spread.

"Come and see and try what we have," she said.



The Alebrije, a new restaurant, has opened on Southwest 11th Street.

Staff photo by Jade McDowell

BMCC picks new president

By **KATHY ANEY**
STAFF WRITER

Blue Mountain Community College board members voted unanimously Monday to hire Dennis Bailey-Fougner as the college's next president.

Bailey-Fougner, the seventh person to hold the position, emerged from a pool of 44 applicants and four finalists.

The veteran administrator comes to BMCC from Colorado where he grew up on a farm, a cow-calf and sugar beet operation owned by his family. He most recently worked at Colorado Mesa University in Grand Junction as vice president of community college affairs and chief executive at Western Colorado Community College. He led efforts to reverse declining enrollment at Western Colorado by rebuilding, adding and expanding programs.

"Dennis brings a strong background in community colleges, and the ability to develop and foster relationships with the community," said board chair Chris Brown. "We are excited to bring his expertise and leadership to BMCC as we enter this new chapter."

Bailey-Fougner (pronounced four-near) himself attended a community college. Later he earned a bachelor's degree at the University of Oregon, a master's in education from Wichita State University and a doctorate in community college leadership from Oregon State University.

During his time at the UO, he got to know Pendleton during frequent trips there with his two best friends, who lived there.

At a public forum last month at the college, Bailey-Fougner shared his leadership philosophy and vision for the college. To answer a question about his leadership style, he quoted Apple CEO Steve Jobs.

"It doesn't make sense to hire smart people and tell them what to do," Jobs once said. "We hire smart people so they can tell us what to do."

BMCC's new president said he, like Jobs, understands his role.

"I'm not the smartest person in the room," Bailey-Fougner said. "I'm good at building a team and staying out of their way."

He said he would look at creative ways to grow

the college, such as social media platforms, and explore how to increase the number of Native American and non-traditional students. He would push for a formal agreement between BMCC and Eastern Oregon University where financial aid could be used at both institutions. He plans to cultivate numerous relationships in the community. He said he has a passion for bringing education to rural, first-generation and underrepresented students.

At the forum, Bailey-Fougner didn't duck questions about his resignation from his last job in January. He said the decision came after Colorado Mesa University President Tim Foster asked him to fire two of his best community college employees after they took President Foster to task at a community meeting.

"It was a matter of ethics," he said. "I felt like what I was asked to do was not right. I stepped aside."

Bailey-Fougner said he looked forward to the opportunity of guiding BMCC.

"I am honored to be the new president of Blue Mountain Community College," Bailey-Fougner said. "I am very excited to join the exceptional team at BMCC and to work with them and the community to enhance the educational opportunities for our students. I am looking forward to working with the community to find new avenues to grow our economy and workforce."

The board selected Bailey-Fougner over three other finalists including Anthony Rosilez, executive director of the Oregon Teacher Standards and Practice Commission; Jeff Sherman, assistant director for Oregon State University Extension Service and George McNulty, vice-president of student affairs at Colby Community College in Colby, Kansas.

Connie Green will continue to serve as interim president until Bailey-Fougner begins May 1.

The board made the selection after multiple interviews and considering feedback from faculty, staff, students and community members. During the March 13 meeting, board members will consider compensation contract details.

Contact **Kathy Aney** at kaney@eastoregonian.com or 541-966-0810.

Street crew keeps air ambulances moving



Emergency personnel prepare to transfer a patient from a ground ambulance to an air ambulance at Hermiston Municipal Airport last week.

Contributed photo by Rolf Leirvik

HERMISTON HERALD

The Hermiston street department's diligence at the Hermiston Municipal Airport has been a boon for medical transports.

Rolf Leirvik, airport manager, said city staff have worked hard to clear ice and snow off the runway and taxiway during bad weather, allowing Life Flight planes to take off and land.

While most people think of air ambulances as helicopters, Leirvik said small planes can navigate many weather conditions helicopters can't. Last week, he said, there were two trans-

ports that flew seriously injured or ill patients out of the airport when a helicopter wouldn't have been able to make it.

Without the work of city staff and airport staff, Leirvik said, there wouldn't have been a place for the airplanes to land or the ambulance to come out to the plane. The ground had to be especially clear between the ambulance and plane for emergency workers to roll the patient's stretcher smoothly between transports.

"The city put an awful lot of effort in, and we put a lot of effort in," he said.

Local legislators talk about redistricting reform

By **ANTONIO SIERRA**
STAFF WRITER

From his home in Heppner, Greg Smith has represented various swaths of eastern and central Oregon without having to move.

Thanks to multiple rounds of redistricting, the Republican legislator has represented Wallowa County to the east, Crook County to the south, parts of Wasco County to the west and a lot of the space in between — including Hermiston — over his 10 terms in the Oregon House of Representatives.

And in a state where the Oregon Legislature draws its own districts, Smith

expects his constituency will change again once the U.S. Census delivers its 2020 population count.

"There's nothing more political than redistricting," he said.

A coalition of civic organizations is banding together to try to take the politics out of the process.

As it stands now, the initial process of drawing legislative maps is handled like any other bill that goes before the Legislature: lawmakers deliberate on a draft version of the map, vote on it, and then forward it to the governor for a signature.

If the process hits a roadblock — legislators can't agree to a map, the gover-

nor vetoes the proposal, or a judge overturns it — the power of creating legislative districts is ceded to the Oregon Secretary of State. After the recent death of Secretary of State Dennis Richardson, it remains to be seen who will fill the position.

According to state law, every district must have contiguous boundaries, contain equal population, use existing political or geographic boundaries, keep common communities of interest intact, and maintain connection through transportation links.

The law also prevents the Legislature from considering favoring a political

party or incumbent when drawing districts.

But in practice, politics comes into play often whenever lawmakers are tasked with redoing the political map.

Northeast Oregon's three legislators — all members of the Republican minority — had mixed views about the upcoming redistricting cycle. Rep. Greg Baretto, of Cove, said he was "pessimistic at best."

Smith, the Heppner Republican whose district includes Morrow County, Hermiston and Milton-Freewater, said he wants to make sure local residents are heard when the redistricting process starts.

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16. On-site registration begins at 10 a.m., with the plunge at 11 a.m. at **Willow Creek Dam**, located on Willow Creek Road, just outside of Heppner. The cost to plunge is \$20. In addition, T-shirts will be available at the event. Plungers can register in advance at www.eventbrite.com.

A small nonprofit animal rescue based in Hermiston, Fuzz Ball focuses on sick, injured and stray animals in and around the Hermiston area. Animal foster homes are needed. In addition, donations, which are tax-deductible, are welcome. Current needs include financial, pet supplies, blankets, beds, food and toys.

For more information, contact **Deona Siex** at 541-561-3337 or deonasiex@gmail.com. For more about Fuzz Ball, search Facebook or visit www.fuzzballrescue.com.

The former **Carlson's Drug** in Umatilla, which was purchased by **Columbia River Health** and renamed **Columbia River Pharmacy** last fall, is closing out its selection of gifts

and accessories.

Cathy Putnam, who owned the drugstore and now works as a pharmacist there, said everything is 50 percent off and she is donating all of the money from the sales to the **Agape House** nonprofit in Hermiston.

The **American Red Cross** blood drive held Feb. 18 at **Good Shepherd Medical Center** collected 28 units from 41 donors. Volunteer **Patti Perkins** said the Hermiston community should be proud to have a number of regular donors. Each blood donation, she said, can save up to three lives.

Also, Perkins expressed appreciation to the **Community Women of Irrigon and Boardman**, who provided canteen. The service groups that volunteer, she said, help in the success of the donor drives.

With the continual need for a sustainable supply of blood products, people are urged to make sure to take time to donate. A blood donation event is held the third Monday of each month at Good Shepherd. The next one is March 18 from 12:30-5:30 p.m. While walk-ins are welcome, Perkins said it's helpful for volunteers if

people make an appointment by calling 1-800-448-3543. For more information, visit www.redcross.org.

The **Umatilla County Cultural Coalition** recently awarded \$14,385 to 16 cultural projects, including **Inland Northwest Musicians** and the **Echo Heritage Association**.

According to board chairperson **Norma Barber**, funding comes from donations to the **Oregon Cultural Trust**. That money is then allocated to regional coalitions, who select local projects to fund. The grants help support everything from museum tours and cultural events to restoration projects and art projects.

For more information, contact **Karen L. Hill** at umatillacountyculture@gmail.com.

A number of local residents participated in the 27th annual **Walla Walla Karate-do Invitational**. The Feb. 16 event in Touchet, Washington, was held by sense **Dave Lybbert**.

Events included Kata, weapons, and 3-point sparring (Kumite) and featured participants from age 4 through more than 40.

Out of 15 students that

participated, **Eastern Oregon Family Taekwondo** made a very good showing, said **Erwin Watson**. The local group was the only taekwondo school that participated, as the rest were karate schools from across Oregon, Idaho, Washington and California. The local school brought home 17 trophies and two medals.

The local contingency included **Lorry Watson**, **Erwin Watson**, **Kionna Idris**, **Anna Rivera**, **Edwin Torres**, **Jordan Robertson**, **Adrian Wedam**, **Lisa Wedam**, **Nathan Sedan**, **Rob Cox**, **Jordan Velasco**, **Amauri Black**, **Jezy Higareda**, **Isiah Diaz**, **Max Gustufson**, **Lukas Harmon**, **Ruth Vaderstelt** and **Ervin Higareda**.

The menu for the **Harker Senior Activity Center** on March 7 will be ham and yams, broccoli salad, a vegetable and dessert. The menu for March 12 is a baked potato with chili and condiments, served every Tuesday and Thursday from noon to 12:30 p.m.

You can submit items for our weekly *By The Way* column by emailing your tips to editor@hermistonherald.com