

Let the sunshine in

The best advice I've ever seen on the internet may be the meme that advises, "Dance like no one is watching, email like it may one day be read aloud in a deposition."



Jade McDowell

Journalists often get their hands on emails that the sender never intended for public consumption. Sometimes that's the result of someone forwarding the information to us, but other times government employees and elected officials are surprisingly forgetful that "we the people" have a right to read the communications they send and receive about their taxpayer-funded work.

It was only four years ago that former Oregon Gov. John Kitzhaber resigned after journalists successfully waged a legal battle to make First Lady Cylvia Hayes' emails public — emails that showed her asking Kitzhaber's taxpayer-funded staff to book hotels for her private business trips. At the same time, then-New Jersey Governor Chris Christie's approval ratings were at an all-time low as he dealt with the fallout of journalists obtaining an aide's infamous email that it was "time

for some traffic problems in Fort Lee."

Journalists will be celebrating public records during Sunshine Week all week, but public records laws aren't only for investigative journalists. You have the exact same rights as any reporter to access emails, police reports, building permits, campaign contributions, meeting minutes, salaries, contracts, voting records, budgets and a long list of other information.

In fact, according to the Columbia Journalism Review, these days only 7.6 percent of public records requests filed under the Freedom of Information Act are filed by journalists.

What might you do with public records if you're not a journalist? They might support your side of the story in a lawsuit, help you do due diligence on a piece of property you want to buy or allow you to get a better understanding about how a piece of legislation came to be. You might have to pay a fee to help the agency recoup the cost of the staff time for filling the request, but they have to give them to you.

I started my career as a journalist with a particular appreciation for public records, as my student reporter days were spent at Brigham Young University. While BYU had a won-

derful journalism program, we faced unique challenges in covering the university because it was privately funded. Records that would have been available to student reporters at our rival University of Utah — police reports about high-profile campus incidents, the construction budget for a new building, coaching salaries — were not public records, and BYU was not inclined to voluntarily provide the information.

It caused a scandal, then, when someone leaked a copy of a semester's budget for the student leadership organization and our newspaper published a report outlining how much of the budget was going toward dinners and other perks for the student body council itself instead of activities for the student body at large. There was pushback from the BYU Student Association, but there were also many campus organizations that suddenly decided the time was ripe to implement written policies on responsible use of department credit cards.

That's why public records are so important — it's human nature to behave better when someone is looking over our shoulder. So happy Sunshine Week, and may all of your public records requests be granted.

COURTS

Sentences

PENDLETON — The following felony sentences have been imposed in Umatilla County courts:

FELONY

•Bernabe Guardado Escalante, 32, Hermiston, pleaded guilty to Delivery of Methamphetamine and Conspiracy to Commit Class B Felony: sentenced to 13 months Oregon Dept. of Corrections (DOC) and 2 years post-prison supervision for each count.

•Joe Matthew Rivera, 23, Hermiston, pleaded guilty to Failure to Appear I: sentence to discharge; pleaded guilty to Theft II: sentenced to 180 days jail-suspended, 2 years probation and \$140 restitution.

MISDEMEANOR

•Santana Cruz Angel Munoz, 20, Hermiston, pleaded guilty to DUI: sentenced to 30 days jail, 150 days jail-suspended, 2 years probation, 80 hours community service, \$1,000 fine, \$1,755 fine-suspended and 1 year driver's license suspension, plus court costs and fees.

Suits Filed

PENDLETON — The following suits have been filed in Umatilla County courts (interest, court costs and fees not listed):

•Portfolio Recovery Associates LLC vs. Keyla Roman of Hermiston: seeks \$2,348.31.

•Portfolio Recovery Associates LLC vs. Celeste Owen of Hermiston: seeks \$834.82.

•Health Services Asset Management LLC vs. Carol L. Geer: seeks \$978.48.

•Health Services Asset Management LLC vs. Lauri R. Huxoll: seeks \$1,420.28.

•Asset Recovery Group Inc. vs. Maria I. Walchli of Hermiston: seeks \$888.

•Evergreen Financial Services Inc. vs. William Michael Stewart: seeks \$42,354.10.

•HAPO Community Credit Union vs. Cheira L. Mendoza Carrillo of Umatilla: seeks \$23,075.65.

•Capital One Bank vs. Derek L. Portillo of Hermiston: seeks \$4,350.63.

•Capital One Bank vs. Barbara E. Barboe of Hermiston: seeks \$3,925.71.

•Evergreen Financial Services Inc. vs. Christy and William McMillen of Hermiston: seeks \$326.86.

•Evergreen Financial Services Inc. vs. Briana Reyes of Hermiston: seeks \$1,602.65.

•Discover Bank vs. Richard Methvin of Hermiston: seeks \$8,070.06.

•Ray Klein Inc. dba Professional Credit Service vs. Elizabeth Weems of Hermiston: seeks \$503.42.

•Portfolio Recovery Associates LLC vs. Casandra Leonard of Umatilla: seeks \$875.92.

•Portfolio Recovery Associates LLC vs. Ryan Meiers of Stanfield: seeks \$1,030.78.

•Credits Inc. vs. Jason Beyers of Umatilla: seeks \$3,952.35.

•Atlas Financial Services vs. Kyle William Fraunfelder of Hermiston: seeks \$1,677.33.

•Credits Inc. vs. Dakota J. and Lorena S. Hodges of Umatilla: seeks \$573.66.

•Credits Inc. vs. Luis R. Gutierrez of Irrigon: seeks \$1,147.83.

•Ray Klein Inc. dba Professional Credit Service vs. Kaden L. Stice of Umatilla: seeks \$329.26.

Judgments

PENDLETON — The following judgments have been rendered in Umatilla County courts (interest, court costs and fees not listed):

•Evergreen Financial Services Inc. vs. Tia Warren of Hermiston: judgment for \$1,000.

•United Finance Co. vs. Isabel Alvarez Ramirez of Stanfield: judgment for \$6,660.67.

•Cach LLC vs. Marty Stewart

of Hermiston: judgment for \$8,059.91.

•Credits Inc. vs. Sarahi H. Mendoza (Hernandez) of Hermiston: judgment for \$591.49.

•Ray Klein Inc. vs. Clark D. Thomason of Hermiston: judgment for \$1,747.61.

•Credits Inc. vs. Christina A. Fritz of Hermiston: judgment for \$697.80.

•York International Corporation-UPG vs. Columbia Basin Heating and Cooling LLC of Umatilla: judgment for \$6,674.20.

•Atlas Financial Services vs. Austin Fowler of Hermiston: judgment for \$1,962.78.

•Credits Inc. vs. Dawn M. Raymond of Hermiston: judgment for \$2,005.77.

•United Finance Co. vs. Alfonso Colin Gutierrez of Boardman: judgment for \$722.78.

•Credits Inc. vs. Ernesto Gutierrez and Belen Carrillo Gutierrez of Umatilla: judgment for \$2,340.47.

Divorces

PENDLETON — Divorce decrees were signed in Umatilla County courts for:

Steven Mendoza Estrada and Ada Alicia Castillo of Hermiston; Rob Rankin and Tina Rankin of Hermiston.

Marriages

PENDLETON — Marriage licenses have been registered in Umatilla County for:

Michael Elliott Baskins, 28, and Amanda Hope Nycz, 34, both of Hermiston.

Richard James Koenig, 74, and Merla Darlene Hurd, 64, both of Echo.

Sebastian Perez Ramirez, 23, and Maria Jimenez Ramirez, 26, both of Hermiston.

Julio Cesar Aparicio Perez, 44, and Olivia Luna, 52, both of Boardman.

Kevin Von Scherrer, 65, and Yvonne Manning, 55, both of Boardman.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Thanks for continuing Battle of the Books

I would like to express my gratitude and sincere appreciation to the Hermiston School District for their commitment to continuing a reading tradition that began at Highland Hills Elementary in 1983 — Battle of the Books.

A citywide Battle of the Books Competition occurred at West Park Elementary School this last Saturday. This event was the culminating activity for students who had battled their way to earn the privilege of representing their school after reading and studying in depth 16 titles selected by the elementary teachers last spring.

This program involves many hours of preparation and execution. First year elementary librarian Megan Reeve took on this challenge with the help of various staff members and with the support of parents and carried it to a very successful conclusion celebrating the benefits of reading. These types of programs ensure that students continue to experience

the importance of the written word and teamwork.

I have witnessed firsthand the improvements in reading skills motivated by this unique program. In fact, the spokesperson for one of the teams was a student who was reading well below grade level several years ago. The student and his parents both credit Battle of the Books programs as a major influence on his reading improvement.

Kristi Smalley

Thanks to ALMS Kindness Club

As a board member of The Arc of Umatilla County I would like to express my sincere appreciation to the five members of the ALMS Kindness Club who came out on February 16th to support The Arc's Valentine's Dance. These caring young people signed and distributed Valentines to all of the individuals in attendance so that everyone would receive multiple cards. They also got involved by dancing alongside of attendees and encouraged participation in vari-

ous dances such as the Hokey Pokey and the Chicken Dance.

These students showed what kindness looks like by stepping out of their comfort zones to make the day a whole lot brighter for people with developmental/intellectual disabilities. I am also grateful to their staff adviser, Mariangela Summers for facilitating this valuable volunteer opportunity for these students.

It is very easy to talk about kindness yet it takes a real effort on the part of the individual to actually make a positive influence on others by showing kindness. These students from ALMS definitely "walked their talk" and should inspire all of us to reach out to others in a real way. Let's all ask ourselves what we did today to show genuine kindness to another person. As one student commented to his adviser while at the event, "I just feel so happy inside!" Thank you Kindness Club for being a conduit of happiness for others!

Kristi Smalley
Hermiston

Hermiston Rotary offers scholarships

HERMISTON — The Hermiston Rotary Club Foundation has multiple scholarship opportunities for graduates of west Umatilla and Morrow County schools.

These scholarships are available to all college level students including trade school students: upper division students

including junior, senior, and graduate levels; lower division students including freshmen and sophomores; and trade and technical school students of any age.

Apply online at www.hermistonrotaryclub.com. The link is also available on the Hermiston Rotary Facebook page. Applicants may also download a hard

copy of the application form and guidelines. Mail application and supporting documents to Hermiston Rotary Club Foundation, P.O. Box 142, Hermiston, OR 97838.

Application must be received by April 1, 2019. Interviews will be scheduled beginning the third week in April.

EASTERN OREGON FORUM Presents

TUESDAY, MARCH 19TH, 2019 AT 7:00 P.M.

BLUE MOUNTAIN COMMUNITY COLLEGE (BMCC), 2411 NW CARDEN, PENDLETON, OR.
SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY BUILDING, ROOM ST-200

AFTER THE SHUTDOWN: THE SIGNIFICANCE OF FEDERAL EMPLOYMENT IN EASTERN OREGON FEATURING: CHRIS RICH & JEFF BLACKWOOD



Chris Rich is the Eastern Oregon Regional Economist with the Oregon Employment Department. Chris is a graduate of Eastern Washington University with a degree in Economics. He studies the labor market of eight counties in Eastern Oregon. He provides objective regional economic expertise, analysis, and data for groups, organizations, and individuals with an interest. He and his family live in La Grande.



Jeff Blackwood retired as Forest Supervisor of the Umatilla National Forest, spending his career with the U.S. Forest Service. Since retirement, he has been involved with salmon and steelhead recovery planning, watershed restoration projects, and leadership training. Jeff has also been involved with the Pendleton Center for the Arts and the Eastern Oregon Climate Change Coalition. He and his wife Colleen live in the Mission area.

THE COST FOR THIS SERIES OF 4 FORUMS IS \$15 PER PERSON, \$25 PER COUPLE OR \$5 PER FORUM AT THE DOOR - STUDENTS ARE FREE

For more information about the EO Forum, please contact: Karen Parker at 541-966-3177.

The EO Forum is a collaborative effort among leaders from Blue Mountain Community College, InterMountain Education Service District, the East Oregonian, American Association of University Women, and Harriet Isom, a former United States ambassador who also serves on the committee. This EO Forum program is offered as part of Blue Mountain Community College's annual Arts and Culture Festival. For more information on the festival go to www.bluecc.edu.

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