

Dispatchers on the line for drug bust

By JAYATI RAMAKRISHNAN
STAFF WRITER

They sit at desks for their entire shift, but Umatilla County Dispatchers become closely familiar with almost every public safety incident in the county.

Justin Russell, a sergeant with Umatilla County Sheriff's Office Communications Division, recalled one of their busiest days in recent memory — when local law enforcement enacted Operation Wildfire, a massive drug bust that resulted in nearly 60 arrests.

"There were lots of arrests, and all that was dispatched through here by me and Sgt. (Karen) Primer," he said. "We were here for 14 hours and dispatching pretty much solid the whole time."

As officers from the Blue Mountain Enforcement Narcotics Team and local police contacted people associated with the operation, the dispatch team was back at the office listening and connecting the dots. Each time law enforcement contacted someone to arrest them, dispatchers had to go and physically make sure they had that warrant.

"We are the piece of the puzzle that has custody of the warrant," he said. "When they contact somebody, we have to make sure we actually have that warrant."

Even if they aren't swamped with calls, dispatchers are constantly thinking on their feet, as they take in 911 calls from 25 different law enforcement and emer-



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

Umatilla County Sheriff's Department dispatcher Justine Griffith talks with a caller in 2017 at the Umatilla County Justice Center in Pendleton.

gency medical agencies around the county.

The dispatch center has 17 full-time employees, as well as three sergeants and a captain. When a call comes in, a dispatcher's first job is to get the basics of the call — where the call is coming from, the reason for the call, and if there are any weapons involved. They learn police codes and emergency medical terms, and are responsible for getting information to the right

parties.

"There's a lot of moving parts," Russell said.

The job requires extensive training, but parts of it can only be taught by experience. Dispatchers take non-emergency calls, and learn how to document and enter information into one of the many systems they use. But they also have to talk people through some difficult moments — whether helping them deliver a baby or instruct-

ing them in CPR. The emotional component of helping someone through those experiences can take a toll on dispatchers, too.

Jennifer Bostwick has worked as a paramedic for 28 years, and as a dispatcher for seven. The Pendleton native has done that job on rural island communities in Alaska, cities in Texas, and around the state of Oregon. She has been with Umatilla County dispatch since July.

Bostwick said she is most comfortable in emergency medical dispatching, because that's where her background is.

"EMS, rescue, structure fire calls," she said. "I feel more comfortable because I've been on the ground with those calls. Law enforcement is a newer addition to me, and it's far more busy."

She said one feature of this area is the amount of mutual aid available.

"The different departments kind of overlap with each other," she said. "Here we have Pendleton Police, Hermiston Police, OSP is another layer. That's different than being on an island."

Though the dispatchers deal with a range of calls, Russell said there's always something new coming in.

"Recently we had a plane crash in Hermiston," he said. "That's a pretty rare occurrence. We do a lot of training for scenarios like that."

He said that training helped them act quickly, and get people on the scene within minutes. No one was injured, and everything went well.

Bostwick added that the job takes lots of ongoing training.

"Just today, we were learning how to help people when they're lost, and they call on 911, how to drop pins," she said. "We went to a tactical dispatch class last year, and learned from each other."

"I learn something new every day," she said.

National Dispatch Week is from April 14 to 20.

Tony Orlando comes knocking at Wildhorse

A familiar voice from the '70s will take the stage at Wildhorse Resort & Casino.

Tony Orlando's 1973 hit, "Tie a Yellow Ribbon 'Round the Ole Oak Tree," became his theme song. The familiar anthem of hope, homecoming, reunion and renewal was the No. 1 Billboard song of the year. Other top hits by Orlando include "Knock Three Times," "Candida," "He Don't Love You (Like I Love You)" and "My Sweet Gypsy Rose."

Orlando will perform live

in concert Saturday, April 20 at 8 p.m. in the Rivers Event Center, located off Interstate 84, Exit 216, Mission. A no-host bar will be available.

The "Tony Orlando and Dawn" TV variety show ran from 1973-77 on CBS. It catapulted the duo from popular recording artists into major stars. They rank among the Top 100 Billboard Magazine artists of all-time.

Orlando is the recipient of three American Music

Awards and two People's Choice Awards for best male entertainer. In addition, he was awarded a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame for his achievements in the entertainment industry.

Tickets for the 21-and-older show are \$49-\$69 and can be purchased via the Wildhorse Gift Shop or www.wildhorseresort.com. Veterans and active military personnel can receive a 20 percent discount for up to four tickets when buying at the gift shop.

Workshop training available to area teachers



Orlando

Area high school teachers have an opportunity to participate in an all-expense paid workshop in Massachusetts.

Participants during the 2 1/2 day training will learn how to use the Harvard Case Study Method developed by Professor David Moss of the Harvard Business School. The League of Women Voters of Ore-

gon are sponsoring the trip, which will take place in August. The local chapter will nominate one high school teacher — with a focus on U.S. history, government or civics — from each district in Umatilla and Morrow counties to participate.

For more information, contact Toni Lampkin at tonilampkin@gmail.com.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Tickets for all events on sale now in person at Wildhorse Gift Shop or wildhorseresort.com



CINCO DE BINGO

OVER \$7,000 IN CASH PRIZES

Join the Fiesta! FOOD, DRINK SPECIALS AND FUN!

Sunday, May 5 • Reserve your seat online for early access!



BANDA MACHOS

CONCERT AND AFTER PARTY!

Friday, May 10 • 8pm



CASINO • HOTEL • GOLF • CINEPLEX • RV • MUSEUM • DINING • TRAVEL PLAZA


800.654.9453 • PENDLETON, OR • I-84, EXIT 216, wildhorseresort.com. Owned and operated by CTUIR. Management reserves all rights to alter, suspend or withdraw promotions/offers at any time.

Test-drives that turn into your go-to equipment:

RDO does that.

Join us for our Drive Green Event for test-drives, demos and incredible savings!

APRIL 11TH - 13TH

\$500 OFF¹

1-5 SERIES TRACTORS

UP TO

\$350 OFF²

ATTACHMENTS



Learn more at RDOequipment.com/DriveGreen

HERMISTON
78200 OR-207
541-567-8327



*Coupon valid only at participating RDO Equipment Co., John Deere dealers. Subject to availability and may be discontinued or modified at any time. Other exclusions and restrictions may apply. Digital coupon must be surrendered at time of purchase. No reproductions will be accepted. Limit of one coupon per person per purchase. Savings applied to the total consistent with applicable sales and use taxes and environmental fees and shipping/delivery charges. See participating dealer for complete details. 1. Coupon valid for \$500.00 off the agreed upon purchase price of any new 1 Series through 5 Series tractor (up to 125 hp) from an authorized John Deere Dealer made within 21 days of 2019 Drive Green Event registration. 2. Coupon valid for 15% off the total purchase of 3 or 4 attachments with a maximum discount of \$150 or 20% off the total purchase of 5 or more attachments with a maximum discount of \$350 on any new John Deere attachments for Gator™ Utility Vehicles or 1 through 5 Series Tractors from a participating John Deere dealer. Customer must redeem coupon within 90 days of 2019 Drive Green Event registration. Identification of attachments is based on John Deere's definition of an attachment as items ordered of a unique number that enhance performance or customization of base code equipment. Not valid on attachments ordered as an option code, on previously purchased attachments, John Deere Merchandise, implements, self-propelled or pull-type equipment ordered as a base code, Frontier™, John Deere, AAI Products, Sunbelt or any private label parts and hardware. John Deere and Frontier implements are excluded. Offer cannot be combined with any other attachments offers.