GOBHI heading in a new direction

By JADE MCDOWELL
NEWS EDITOR

THE DALLES — As Greater Oregon Behavioral Health, Inc. conducts its job search for a new chief executive officer, interim CEO Karen Wheeler has thrown her hat in the ring for consideration.

Wheeler was announced as interim CEO on Jan. 31, and said she was honored to be chosen.

"I'm really excited and ready for this role," she said.

Wheeler's 35-year career in improving health outcomes includes working for the Oregon Health Authority, the Department of Human Services and 11 years in nonprofit behavioral health. She has served in a senior management position at GOBHI since 2017 and replaces longtime CEO Kevin Campbell after, she said, the board decided to "take us in a new direction."

In a news release, Chris Siegner, chair of the organization's board of directors, said the board recognized the "many years of Kevin's dedicated service to GOBHI and to Eastern Oregon's system of care."

"It is without any doubt that GOBHI, its behavioral health providers, and Eastern Oregon health system stakeholders have benefited enormously from Kevin's dedication, innovation, and his hard work over the last two decades," Siegner stated.

GOBHI, a behavioral health organization based in The Dalles, provides a variety of mental and physical health services aimed at improving wellness outcomes in rural Oregon. The organization is also a co-partner with Moda Health to form the Eastern Oregon Coordinated Care Organization covering 12 counties. Coordinated care organizations work to increase health outcomes for people on the Oregon Health Plan by providing services such as helping patients set up and have transportation to appointments.

As GOBHI moves forward, Wheeler said the organization will be more "lean and mean," with a more efficient administrative structure and more focus on the organization's role serving communities through the CCO. That leaner approach has included eliminating some positions, she said.

In the newest iteration of coordinated care organization, often referred to as CCO 2.0, the state has created a long list of new provisions that CCOs must meet. Wheeler said a few of those requirements include reporting on equity and inclusion outcomes, creating a behavioral health plan and working with partners such as jails and police.

"The state added responsibilities to the role, and staffing requirements," she said.

She said GOBHI plans to be "very strategic and focused" on meeting those new responsibilities. In some cases, that means pulling back or not pursuing new contracts the organization may have in the past so that they can make sure they are in a financially healthy position to serve the communities they serve.

"We can't be distracted chasing shiny objects," Wheeler said.

The past two years, GOBHI has funded mental health services in area schools, including Hermiston School District's RISE program, which teaches children skills such as anger management. Wheeler said the large infusion of money that will soon be coming into school districts through the Student Success Act will allow GOBHI to pull back its investment.

GOBHI offers a much wider array of services than that, however. Services listed on its website include early childhood programs, trauma informed care, behavioral health for senior citizens, transportation to medical appointments, rental assistance, healthy eating initiatives and more.

Eastern Oregon counties can still expect to benefit from plenty of services from GOBHI going forward, Wheeler said.

"We're going to keep doing what we've done in terms of our strengths," she said. "I think community engagement has been a real strength in the past, and we're going to continue with that."

For more information about Greater Oregon Behavioral Health, Inc. visit www.gobhi.org.

Former quartermaster charged with theft of VFW funds

By JESSICA POLLARD
STAFF WRITER

The former quartermaster of a local Veterans of Foreign Wars post has been indicted for the theft of thousands of dollars from the organization, according to court documents.

David Earl Bosley, 73, of Hermiston is facing five charges of first-degree theft of $1,000 or more, two misdemeanor theft charges of $100 or more, and one charge of aggravated theft in the first degree of $10,000 or more.

"There's some disparity between what the victims are saying was stolen and what we can prove," said Hermiston Police Chief Jason Edmiston, whose department took on the investigation last May. "We wanted to get our 'I's' dotted and our 'T's' crossed."

The charges are for thefts that occurred between June 2017 and May 2019 from two different organizational bank accounts. As a Class B felony, aggravated theft carries a maximum sentence of 10 years.

Bosley was quartermaster of the Hermiston VFW Desert Post 4750 from 2016 to 2019, according to Post Commander Ron Jardine.

According to a Veterans of Foreign Wars manual, the role of the quartermaster in a post is as "the custodian of the money and property of the Post, the guardian of its finances and the keeper of the financial records.

The Quartermaster also plays an important role in collecting and processing dues."

In September 2019, Hermiston Desert Post 4750 stated on its website that state VFW officials would come to Hermiston the following month "to conduct matters regarding the embezzlement by 'a past quartermaster' and other matters important to the post."

The post stated "all officers and any interested member should be there, ready to conduct serious business."

Oregon Veterans of Foreign Wars did not respond to request for comment before publication.

In November 2019, Bosley was removed from his position with the organization, and on Feb. 4 a grand jury indicted him on charges. He will be arraigned on March 30.

He is not currently in custody, and if he fails to appear at his arraignment, a warrant for his arrest will be issued.