

Hermiston man's death investigated as homicide

Law enforcement continuing to work during COVID-19 outbreak

By ALEX CASTLE
STAFF WRITER

The Umatilla County Sheriff's Office has opened a homicide investigation after a Hermiston man was found deceased near Alpine Drive northeast of Hermiston on Wednesday morning.

USCO announced that Jordan Deloan Crandall, 28, was found about 9:37 a.m. approximately 75 feet west of Alpine Drive, north of Punkin Center Road and next to an irrigation ditch.

Sheriff's deputies and Oregon State Police responded to the call, and the road was blocked off for several hours as additional personnel arrived to investigate the cause of death. According to a news release, the Umatilla/Morrow County Major Crimes Team was

activated, and based on evidence at the scene, the death is being investigated as a homicide.

An autopsy on Thursday revealed he was killed by a gunshot wound, the Umatilla County Sheriff's Office.

"At this time, there is no reason to believe the general public is in danger due to the homicide," the press release said. "We will release further information when we are able."

Law enforcement efforts through COVID-19

Local law enforcement will still respond to every call for service and make arrests when necessary during the coronavirus pandemic, but Eastern Oregon police departments are adjusting and preparing where they can.

In Hermiston, Police Chief Jason Edmiston said the department is discontinuing any non-criminal fingerprinting until further notice. Non-emergency

access to the police station can be made by appointment by calling 541-567-5519.

Hermiston police have been advised to follow the social distancing guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention of keeping 6 feet between themselves and others whenever possible and to avoid entering residences unless necessary.

Edmiston said his officers have protective gloves, though they won't be wearing any masks. The department is also well stocked on sanitation supplies because Edmiston said he luckily purchased more than 200 bottles of hand sanitizer at Dollar Tree weeks ago when the outbreak first began in Oregon.

With the Umatilla County Jail in Pendleton operating as the only location for police to house those they arrest, Edmiston met with Umatilla County Sheriff Terry Rowan and Morrow County Sheriff Ken Matlack last week to discuss how coronavirus could impact

the jail.

While some departments around the state and country are limiting arrests and calls to service in fears of both spreading the disease or bringing infected individuals to jail where they will spread it to others, local departments haven't implemented any concrete limitations on arrests.

"We've started having some talks internally about how we can limit the impact on the jail," Edmiston said. "That being said, some people belong in jail and need to be arrested."

Edmiston's meeting with the sheriffs also addressed the worst case scenario that police departments are considering around the nation: What happens if a police officer were to test positive for COVID-19?

According to Edmiston, the contingency plan would lean on mutual aid agreements between the region's departments that keep them connected and ready to help

one another when it's needed.

According to a press release from the Oregon State Sheriff's Association, since the outbreak of COVID-19 began in Oregon, the organization has held conference calls with sheriffs, jail and enforcement commanders throughout the state about developing consistent practices and precautionary measures to protect their communities, staff and people in their custody.

"These changes include a careful evaluation of who gets booked into our facilities to limit intakes, working to get low-risk offenders out of jail as soon as possible, a host of environmental precautions, what calls we respond to, practicing social distancing while being visible in the public, screening of staff and screening of individuals in our custody," the release said.

The organization is planning weekly calls to address any changes in their response to the rapidly changing situation.

Walmart hiring more associates to keep up with demand

By JADE MCDOWELL
NEWS EDITOR

As an increasing number of Americans lose their jobs to COVID-19 shutdowns, Walmart is hiring more associates to keep up with demand and giving temporary raises.

The company has announced a plan to hire 150,000 additional employees by the end of May, including 1,200 in Oregon. A news release states that these "will be temporary at first, but many will convert to permanent roles over time."

Walmart is also giving a temporary \$2 per hour pay increase for associates working at its e-commerce fulfillment centers, but that does not include the Hermiston distribution center.

The company is also offering a \$250 referral



A semi-truck enters the Wal-Mart distribution center in 2017 outside of Hermiston.

bonus to fulfillment center associates who refer a new hire. The newly hired associate also receives a \$250 referral bonus.

In the Hermiston Distribution Center, a person can apply online, get hired and begin working in a fulfillment center or distribution

center as soon as that same day.

Josh Burns, manager at the Walmart Distribution Center in Hermiston, said they are recruiting right now for roughly 50 positions, that they hope to hire "as quickly as we can." He said the hiring process normally takes

about two weeks, but can now be completed within 24 hours.

"Our hiring process has been greatly streamlined," he said.

Worries about needing to self-quarantine at home for weeks, added to continuing orders from the governor

to encourage people to stay home, have caused a large increase in purchasing of groceries, paper goods and other items, at times leaving shelves bare in Umatilla County stores.

Grocery stores and the Hermiston distribution center, which takes in shipments of products from vendors and distributes them to Walmart stores around the Pacific Northwest, have seen increased workloads as a result. Burns said the distribution center has seen demand "well beyond what was forecast" for a usual spring.

"We're experiencing new records for demand almost daily," he said.

Anyone interested in applying for positions can visit careers.walmart.com online and search for the town where they want to work.

For those who already work for the company, Walmart has announced that it will be giving \$300 bonuses to all full-time hourly workers and \$150 bonuses to part-time hourly workers employed with the company as of March 1. Those bonuses will be paid on April 2.

The company has also adjusted its leave policy, giving two weeks' pay to those who miss work after being diagnosed with COVID-19 or directed to quarantine.

"Walmart associates have gone above and beyond the call of duty in serving our customers during these unprecedented times," Doug McMillon, president and CEO of Walmart, said in a statement. "We want to reward our associates for their hard work and recognize them for the work that is in front of us."

Tasty Tuesday a hit with Umatilla residents, businesses

The city picked up the tab for its citizens to enjoy a free lunch

By ANNIE FOWLER
SPORTS EDITOR

The line around G&J Dairy Freeze in Umatilla on Tuesday was more than 20 people long. The patrons were waiting to pick up their lunches that were courtesy of the city during its first Tasty Tuesday.

The program, with the help of six local eateries, provided lunch for every citizen who wanted to participate. Tuesday morning, there were 2,000 orders, with more still coming in.

Esmeralda Horn, the city's development and recreation coordinator, had two boxes of food in her car from Java Junkies, which was offering sandwiches and chips. She made stops at the Umatilla RV Park, several apartment complexes, and the weigh station, with a plenty more to go.

"This is fun," she said. "I was raised in Umatilla. When I got hired by the city almost three years ago, it was the greatest day of my life. I wanted to give back. People are hungry, the stores are scary and people are laid off. There is no judgement here."

City manager Dave Stockdale was the mastermind behind Tasty Tuesday, which came to life last Thursday.

"He came into my office and said, 'Let's feed our city,'" Horn said. "I said, 'You are crazy.' He said, 'A little bit.' He ran it through the city council, which approved it."

Not only was the city feeding its residents, but it also was helping the local restaurants, which have seen business decline as much as 75 percent after governor Kate Brown restricted estab-



The Line at G&J Dairy Freeze in Umatilla Tuesday afternoon was tightly packed with people awaiting food Tuesday afternoon.



Esmeralda Horn, the development and recreation manager for the City of Umatilla, instructs those waiting in line to maintain proper social distancing during at G&J Dairy Freeze in Umatilla Tuesday afternoon.

ishments to takeout only last week.

"Kids get a free lunch at the school, but sometimes it isn't enough," Horn said. "We thought we'd boost morale and help our businesses get some orders in. Help them and feed our community."

No matter the tally, the city is picking up the check. City employees from all departments were making deliveries, while some people chose to pick up their own meals.

"We won't let anyone go hungry," Horn said.

Horn said there are 7,400

it was available to everyone, regardless of need.

Each eatery had a limited menu of items that were available to order. GG's Smokehouse and Catering only had pulled pork sandwiches, while the Acapulco Food Truck was offering burritos.

Rae's Dayz Diner & Cakery had orders for 500 lunches, with the bacon cheeseburger topping the charts. Orders also came with fries, tots or chips. By noon, they had filled one-third of the orders, but there was no stopping until everyone had been fed.

"It's been extremely nice to be busy," Rae's Dayz employee Terri Nobles said. "We had to lay off three people, and three people have had minimal work. I was one of the three laid off the

past two weeks. It's nice to be back."

Just down the street at Donitas Tacos, owner Miguel Olivera said he is happy to have the business. His sales have been down

75% since the start of last week.

"When they came to us, we said yes," Olivera said. "I have done at least 100 orders, and I have texts for a least 100 more."



GG's Smokehouse Catering owner Amber Bieren assembles sandwiches for take-out and delivery during the city of Umatilla's Tasty Tuesday event Tuesday morning. Bieren capped orders at 360 in order to have enough food for all of her customers.

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