



UPDATES

Umatilla County records new COVID-19 deaths

HERMISTON HERALD

Umatilla County Public Health announced the county's 50th and 51st COVID-19 deaths over the past week.

According to a news release on Wednesday, Dec. 2, a 94-year-old man who tested positive for COVID-19 on Oct. 27 died Nov. 12 at Avamere at Hermiston. The release said he had underlying medical conditions.

A second news release on Tuesday, Dec. 8, reported that a 74-year-old man tested positive for COVID-19 on Nov. 24 and died Nov. 30 at Providence St. Mary Medical Center in Walla Walla, Washington. He had underlying medical conditions.

"Counseling and crisis support services can be accessed by calling Lifeways at 866-343-4473. Interpretation services are available," the news release stated. "We encourage everyone to be respectful as a family in our community grieves."

Umatilla County has reported 312 new cases of COVID-19 during the seven-day period of Dec. 2-8. The county has had a reported 4,713 cases since the pandemic began. Morrow County has had 710 cases and seven deaths.

Statewide, Oregon has reported 85,788 cases of COVID-19 and 1,045 deaths of individuals with COVID-19 since the pandemic began. Those numbers place Oregon at the 46th lowest cases per capita in the country, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

For more information about COVID-19 numbers, visit covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#mobility, or for information from the Oregon Health Authority on Oregon's hospitalizations, school metrics and other data, visit govstatus.egov.com/OR-OHA-COVID-19.



Ben Lonergan/Hermiston Herald

New Agape House director Mark Gomolski, left, and outgoing interim director Cathy Putnam pose for a portrait outside of the nonprofit's Hermiston location on Tuesday, Dec. 8, 2020.

Familiar face

Mark Gomolski named new Agape House director

By JADE MCDOWELL
NEWS EDITOR

After four and a half years as a volunteer at Agape House, Mark Gomolski is taking the helm of the nonprofit.

Gomolski replaces long-time director Dave Hughes, who retired in October 2019, and interim director Cathy Putnam. He started on Dec. 1 and will work 30 hours a week in the role.

Agape House serves as Hermiston's food bank and provides other services for residents in need, including showers for homeless residents and bags of food each weekend for students who depend on their school district for meals on weekdays. It is run by Eastern Oregon Mission, which also runs the shelter for families known as Martha's House.

Gomolski said the organization has seen a significant increase in need during the pandemic.

"We try to help out as much as we can," he said.

He said they saw a large spike in people requesting food boxes



Hermiston Herald, File

Mark Gomolski loads food into a box while volunteering at the Agape House in Hermiston in 2018.

"IT'S BEEN A GOOD EXPERIENCE, BUT I THINK MY HEART IS MORE HERE, WITH THIS KIND OF WORK."

— Mark Gomolski, new director of Agape House

in the early spring, when the first shutdown sparked the year's largest round of layoffs. Things got better after the CARES Act was passed and people were able to get extra unemployment insurance money, Gomolski said, but the end of those extra benefits, combined with the end of local harvest jobs for the year, has pushed the number of people seeking services back up.

According to a news release from Eastern Oregon Mission, through November Agape House handed out 9,286 food boxes and more than 11,000 weekend food backpacks for students so far this year.

He said that level of service has been made possible by donations from various local businesses and individuals, including restaurants that donated their excess food during state-mandated closures this year, and fresh produce from local farms.

Gomolski takes over as director after retiring to Hermiston in 2012 from a career in county government in Chicago. Area

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Contributed Photo/Capital Press

Marty Myers, general manager of Threemile Canyon Farms in Boardman, died Dec. 1.

Threemile Canyon Farms GM Marty Myers dies

Myers served on the Oregon Board of Agriculture

By GEORGE PLAVEN
CAPITAL PRESS

Marty Myers, general manager of Threemile Canyon Farms and a member of the Oregon Board of Agriculture, has died. He was 68.

A spokeswoman for R.D. Offutt Co., which owns Threemile Canyon Farms, said Myers died Dec. 1 at his home of natural causes.

In a company statement, Offutt CEO Tim Curoe said Myers was the "visionary force" behind Threemile Canyon Farms, which includes Oregon's largest dairy operation.

"(Myers) had a vision for the farm to be a sustainable opera-

tion, which was well ahead of the times," Curoe said. "He brought that idea into reality by creating a 'closed loop' system where nothing would be wasted, and that remains the foundation for the farm's remarkable and continued success."

Myers began working with R.D. Offutt Co., based in Fargo, North Dakota, in 1994 as a business development manager focused on agribusiness in the western U.S. The company acquired Threemile Canyon Farms in 1998, and placed Myers in charge as general manager.

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