

# Umatilla County Sheriff's Office mourns loss of deputy

HERMISTON HERALD

The Umatilla County Sheriff's Office identified Jason Post as the deputy who drowned Saturday, June 5, in Wallowa County.

Post was 34 and leaves behind a wife and baby girl.

The sheriff's office reported Post and three other adults entered a craft on the water near the Minam Store at Minam State Park and an accident threw them into the water.

"Deputy Jason Post did not reach shore and his body was found shortly afterward," according to a press release from the sheriff's office.

Post began his career in 2010 as a reserve officer for the Umatilla County Sheriff's Office and in 2013 was

hired as a full-time patrol deputy. He was a field training officer and a mentor to many officers.

"He was well respected and loved throughout the entire law enforcement community," the press release stated.

Umatilla County Parole and Probation in mid-April hired Post as a probation officer.

"He was known for his devotion to his family," according to the press release, "and he was very open about making the career change so he could focus on family and spend more time with them."

Umatilla County sheriff's deputies and other law enforcement agencies escorted Post's body from the Loveland Funeral Chapel, La Grande, to



Phil Wright/Hermiston Herald

**A Umatilla County Sheriff's Office vehicle drives Saturday, June 5, 2021, along Adams Avenue, La Grande, in a procession with state and local law enforcement to escort the body of Umatilla County Parole and Probation deputy Jason Post to the county line. Post drowned earlier that day on the Minam River.**

home in Pendleton, where local law enforcement and first responders gathered to honor him.

"Thank you for the overwhelming support that was demonstrated by so many of

our extended law enforcement family yesterday as we brought him home," the sheriff's office stated. "We express our deepest condolences to his entire family. We are your family and our

hearts are broken."

Umatilla County sheriff's Lt. Sterrin Ward on June 7 reported staff from the sheriff's office and parole and probation met that morning for a debrief of the events

from the weekend.

The Wallowa County Sheriff's Office, Umatilla County Sheriff's Office or other law enforcement agencies have yet to provide details on the accident that led to Post's death.

Ashly Lehman, wife of Pendleton police Sgt. Jon Lehman, set up a fundraiser at [www.gofundme.com](http://www.gofundme.com) for the benefit of Post's wife, Rosana, and baby, Dalilah.

Funeral services for Post will be Sunday, June 13, at 10 a.m. at the Pendleton Round-Up Grounds. After the service, a funeral procession will lead to a private burial service at Skyview Memorial Park with friends and family. A reception will follow at the Let'er Buck Room at the Pendleton Round-Up Grounds. The funeral and reception at the Round-Up Grounds are open to the public.



Ben Lonergan/Hermiston Herald, File

**State leadership of the Veterans of Foreign Wars revoked the charter for Hermiston VFW Post 4750, leaving its members at large and without a post to call their own.**

## VFW post's charter revoked

By JADE MCDOWELL  
NEWS EDITOR

Local members of Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 4750 of Hermiston said the state VFW leadership revoked the post's charter.

The decision means members of the post are now "at large" members of the VFW and must have someone sponsor them if they want to join an adjacent post in Lone, Kennewick or Pendleton. According to Harold Roberts, a former post commander, the post has about \$600,000 in assets, including its building, cash and equipment. Roberts said all of that now belongs to the VFW Department of Oregon.

"That money was raised by local veterans, for local veterans, and it needs to stay in the community," he said.

The state post did not respond to multiple requests for comment, but a member of Post 4750 provided the *Hermiston Herald* with a copy of a letter dated May 17 from State Commander George Carroll, stating the charter had been revoked and the Hermiston post was no longer an official VFW post.

"If you have kept abreast of the evolving situation at the Post, it should not come as a surprise to you," he wrote. In February 2020, David Earl Bosley, the post's quartermaster in charge of finances,

was charged with six felony theft charges and two misdemeanors after the Hermiston Police Department investigated allegations of embezzlement of tens of thousands of dollars from the post.

Afterward, state leadership put the post on probation. According to the letter from Carroll, the team "weeded out" members who had been "grossly negligent" and worked hard to fix past errors. The post briefly came out from under its probation, but, according to the letter, afterward the post struggled to keep leadership positions filled and have a quorum at meetings.

"Sadly, this indicates the Post is not able to sustain a healthy membership that will work together," the letter stated.

Roberts disagrees. He said after the post's probation ended, he brought in eight new members — an 8% increase in membership. Their February 2021 meeting had about 20 members present, he said, which was more than enough for a quorum, and all leadership positions were filled.

"I got a call yesterday from a guy wanting to join, because one of my flyers was still existing at Les Schwab," he said. "This is an active VFW."

Roberts said Carroll and other state leaders did not like

American Legion Post 37, another veterans organization that has many of the same members. According to Roberts, after he allowed some American Legion members to speak at the VFW's February meeting, he was notified by Carroll that the post was going back on probation and American Legion's lease agreement to meet in the VFW building was terminated.

At that point, Roberts resigned his position as post commander and Marvin Hamilton stepped into the role.

Hamilton said he had been a member of the VFW for 12 years but had not been very active for a while until Roberts reached out to him. He said he and other younger veterans had big plans and are disappointed they were never able to put in place, including coffee gatherings for veterans, help getting counseling, and work with CAPECO to provide food and other assistance.

"We tried to get that going but they shut us down before we were able to get started," he said.

Jose Ortiz, the post's quartermaster, also said it felt like the state leadership pulled the rug out from under them right as they were trying to get resources together that would have helped local veterans.

## Lifeways protests decision denying it contract for mental health, addiction services

By BRYCE DOLE  
STAFF WRITER

Lifeways, a community mental health provider that has served Umatilla County for 14 years, is protesting the county's decision to award a contract to a new mental health and addiction services provider.

The Ontario-based provider, which operates in much of Eastern Oregon and Idaho, sent a letter to Umatilla County on Wednesday, June 2, protesting the county's move to appoint Community Counseling Solutions as its new provider. Lifeways and CCS were the only two organizations that responded to the county's request for a proposal for a new provider to handle both mental health and addiction services.

In an email to the *East Oregonian*, Liz Johnsen, chief operating officer for Lifeways, did not answer questions about the appeal, but said, "Lifeways will be issuing a formal press release regarding the protest." She added that Lifeways' protest "is based on our review of the proposal CCS submitted."

The county board of commissioners voted on May 26, in agreement with a unanimous recommendation from a five-person committee, to award the contract to Community Counseling Solutions, a Heppner-based behavioral health provider serving four counties, over Lifeways. The committee was made up of an educator, law enforcement staff and county employees, including Umatilla County Commissioner John Shafer.

County officials are in the process of reviewing the letter from Lifeways. Shafer referred all questions about the protest to Doug Olsen, the county's legal counsel. Olsen did not respond to multiple calls requesting comment.

Lifeways employs more than 120 people in the county, most of whom are county residents, Johnsen has said. She has voiced concerns over how the change in providers will affect Lifeways employees and patients but so far has declined to comment on how the change will impact the several facilities Lifeways operates in the county, including Aspen Springs in Hermiston and

McNary Place in Umatilla.

Kimberly Lindsay, executive director for CCS, has said Lifeways employees have been reaching out to her to discuss their employment options.

The move makes Community Counseling Solutions the county's central provider for mental health and substance abuse services. Those services used to be divided between the county's own alcohol and drug treatment provider and Lifeways, which handled mental health.

The change came through a growing consensus that patients in crisis often fall under both categories at once, prompting the county to put out a request for proposals for a community mental health provider to combine these services.

In May, Lifeways reopened the former Aspen Springs Psychiatric Hospital in Hermiston as a secure residential treatment facility after closing in April due to staffing challenges made worse by the pandemic. The facility, which housed patients in need of acute psychiatric care, was open for seven months before the change in care.



**AFTER 45 YEARS OF DEDICATED SERVICE TO RDO Equipment Company and the local community, Reinhold "Reinie" Fischer, is setting his sights on a well-deserved retirement and spending more time with his wife, Judie.**

Reinie joined Pioneer Implement in 1976, bringing with him more than a decade of experience as a baler expert. Two years later, he became Service Manager and held that position for the next 28 years. He then transitioned to Customer Service Advisor, where he has enjoyed working directly with the customers that he has dedicated so many years to.

*All of us here at RDO will miss Reinie dearly and his contributions will not soon be forgotten!*

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