

HERMISTON

Rivercrest Behavioral Health hires two new nurse practitioners

Nurses McCartney and Grimm come to the area at a 'pivotal' time

By ERICK PETERSON
Editor/Senior Reporter

Two new nurse practitioners are coming to Hermiston. Rivercrest Behavioral Health & Wellness is adding Carrie McCartney and Alexis Grimm to its Hermiston location. This comes at a time when demand has grown for mental health professionals, according to Heather Bacon, Rivercrest founder.

McCartney and Grimm join a team which includes Bacon and Jennifer Cooper, also is a licensed clinical psy-

chologist. Bacon said McCartney and Grimm are two expert professionals, whose skills and backgrounds complement one another and the rest of the Rivercrest team.

McCartney was in family medicine, before returning to school to obtain a psychiatric nurse practitioner license. She has experience in inpatient and outpatient care. Grimm, a recent Vanderbilt University graduate, has outpatient experience.

"I really like the combination of their skill sets," Bacon said. McCartney treats primarily adults for medication management. Grimm is experienced with childhood problems, specifically attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder, as well as

depression and anxiety.

Bacon and Cooper are psychologists and cannot prescribe medication. The new nurse practitioners, however, can make prescriptions. Bacon and Cooper will continue to counseling and assessing patients, and they will send them to the nurses for medication.

Grimm also has experience in therapy, so she may help with that.

Bacon likes the "personality fit" with the two nurses, as a big part of mental health is building rapport and therapeutic bonds. She felt an immediate connection to McCartney and Grimm, so she said she believes the community will feel likewise.

These newcomers were hired from a surprisingly large pool of applicants, Bacon said. Ultimately, she interviewed six people who were all interested in rural care. She concluded people are trying to escape cities and they wanted to move to Hermiston. This represents a shift, she said. In her nine years of private practice, she encountered many more people who favored cities.

Having more medical professionals, particularly mental health providers, in Hermiston is terrific, Bacon said. So many people are seeking help, a lot of them are being turned away or have been redirected to far-away cities and virtual services. There are just not

enough local providers and nurses to help all the people in need.

Rivercrest is turning away an average of six referrals per day.

"We're sending them to Pendleton, but Pendleton is sending them to us," Bacon said. Patients are being placed on waiting lists, and this is not good. Some people, particularly suicidal individuals, cannot wait.

Even when she is able to connect patients virtually with providers in Portland, problems remain. Bacon has found many people in the community do not like virtual services that connect patients with professionals through the internet. There are privacy and con-

nectivity issues with virtual services.

"So, a lot of people did not receive care last year, during a pivotal time," Bacon said. Mental needs are increasing, partially because of COVID-19, but also the "political culture" of our day.

McCartney will start in October. Grimm, who is transitioning from Texas, will begin after she achieves Oregon approval. This should be in December, Bacon said.

Rivercrest is looking to hire a new medical assistant and a clinical psychologist. Even with the new additions, our community is still underserved, she said. She hopes to grow even further.

Umatilla couple go out on their own, together

Fish and Mix open two stores next to each other

By ERICK PETERSON
Editor/Senior Reporter

Techla Fish and Travis Mix have had some ups and downs during the pandemic. On a sad note, they have lost family. They also have gotten sick with COVID-19, twice. In short, this has been a trying time. Still, there has been something good during this time. They started new businesses.

A flower shop, called Uptown Floral, and a game store, Game Forge, occupy side-by-side storefronts on Sixth Street in Umatilla.

They are not new to business, as they have owned stores in the past. Fish even grew up in a florist family, as her mother and grandmother had a shop under the same name she has for her store.

Flowers

It is a family tradition, she said. Advised by her sister on the name Uptown Floral, Fish said the store had to be named after her family's old store. "It could not be any other way," she said.

The pair had been working. Fish was employed at H&R Block. Mix was at Amazon. During the pandemic, they were suddenly unemployed. And it was during this time, they started thinking about what they wanted to do with their lives — not what they had to do,

but what they wanted to do. They wanted to follow their passions, so that is what they did.

They took their savings and money from pandemic checks, and they put it into a new business. They started the floral business first, placing it in their garage. It was a safe bet, they figured, because Fish had a lot of experience. Also, a major florist in the area was closing, which would mean less competition. They knew it would not take long to develop a clientele.

They were right. Business took off, Fish said, and they quickly built a solid customer base. This allowed them to purchase leases on the two spots in Umatilla, stores that would be next door to each other.

Fish was ready to move her flowers into the building, so it opened first, around October/November 2020. It took a little longer for Game Forge, because Mix still had to build an inventory. Its grand opening was July 17.

Games

"These are vastly different businesses," Fish said. She spends her days arranges bouquets, while her husband sells games and organizes game events next door.

Still, they enjoy being close to one another. Their stores are joined by a door in the back. They even share a bathroom.

"That part can be a little stressful, actually," Fish said, laughing about the bathroom.



Erick Peterson/Hermiston Herald
Travis Mix, owner of Game Forge in Umatilla, sells figurines, games, cards and more.

Mix said one of the best things about this arrangement is being close together and to their son, Rodger, who spends much time in their stores.

"It's really, really fun," Rodger said. Spending time in the store, he gets to play games and paint miniatures. He also likes meeting customers and recommending games, such as Zombie Kids, Ticket to Ride, Pandemic and Small World.

Mix said he enjoys doing something he likes — working for himself, rather than working for someone else.

A gaming fan, he is surrounded by Risk, Dungeons and Dragons and more.

"I like board games," he said. "Now, I don't have to spend much money on them."



Erick Peterson/Hermiston Herald
Store owners Debora and Techla Fish, mother and daughter, have been in the flower business for years. They now operate Uptown Floral in Umatilla.

One other bonus: He buys games for himself at a discount.

But Mix also said he is happy to contribute to his community. He likes to provide fun for people who

might not otherwise have much to do. At his shop, he hosts various gaming tournaments and activities. Some days, people even bring their televisions and consoles to play at tables in Game Forge.

Dollar General now open in Umatilla

Hermiston Herald

The Dollar General in Umatilla now is open.

The company in a press release Monday, Sept. 13, announced the opening.

"Dollar General plans to create new jobs in the Umatilla community as the store is expected to employ approximately six to 10 people, depending on the individual needs of the store," according to the press release.

To commemorate the opening of the new Umatilla store, Dollar General plans to donate 100 new books to a nearby elementary school to benefit students ranging from kindergarten to fifth grade. Through the partnership with the Kellogg Company, the donation will be part of a planned donation of more than 100,000 books across the country to celebrate new Dollar General store openings.

The addition of the Umatilla store also opens the opportunity for schools, nonprofit organizations and libraries within a 15-mile radius of the store to apply for Dollar General Literacy Foundation grants. Since its inception in 1993, the Dollar General Literacy Foundation has awarded more than \$197 million in grants to nonprofit organizations, helping more than 14 million individuals take their first steps toward literacy or continued education, according to the press release. For more informa-

tion about the Dollar General Literacy Foundation

and its grant programs, visit www.dgliteracy.com.



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