



Ben Lonergan/Hermiston Herald

**Sierra Dugan crosses the finish line of the Echo Sage Trail Run, as Joe Miles, 5, rings a bell to congratulate finishers Saturday, Sept. 25, 2021, at the Sno Road Winery vineyard in Echo.**

## Run:

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This was the second time the Eastern Oregon Women for Agriculture hosted the race. Previously, the run was organized by Greg Spike and included a 5k, 10k, 25k and 50k for those brave enough to venture into the realm of ultra marathons.

When the race started to fizzle out, Bethany Woodall, Gina Tyhuis and Gina Gray asked to take over to help support women in agriculture. According to Tyhuis, women own 39% of all farms and ranches in Oregon.

Nicola Feik, whose family farm started in 1847 and whose grandmother was a founding member of the western chapter of Oregon Women for Agriculture, has been involved since she was 4 years old and said they worked to acknowledge the role women have played in agriculture throughout the state's history.

"We're carrying on their legacies," she said.

Additionally, she said the organization works hard to get people more familiar with their food, where it comes from and to make sure agriculture is legislators recognize the importance of agriculture.

To do this, the organization partnered with Oregon Agriculture in the Classroom to help bring farming and ranching into more clear focus. EOWA also spreads "farm facts" and are collaborating to put up informational signs along farms to explain the crops local farms are growing.

The money raised from the run went straight into the local organization's annual scholarship fund, which will provide scholarships to three women pursuing agri-



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**Cole Ayres leads a pack of runners in the 5K competition Saturday, Sept. 25, 2021, at the Echo Sage Trail Run at the Sno Road Winery vineyard in Echo.**



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**Sean Williams runs toward the finish line Saturday, Sept. 25, 2021, during the Echo Sage Trail Run at the Sno Road Winery vineyard in Echo. The annual trail run serves as a fundraiser for Eastern Oregon Women for Agriculture.**

culture degrees in the Baker, Malheur, Morrow, Umatilla, Union or Wallowa counties.

Each applicant has to fill out an application and write a 500- to 1,000-word essay focused on the biggest problems facing agriculture and how they plan to be a part of the solution. Decided by a scholarship committee that ranks the essays on points, the top applicant receives \$1,000, second place receives \$750 while third receives \$500.

Woodall, Tyhuis and Gray hope to continue expanding the race and would like to get cross-country teams more involved.

"It's a challenging course," Tyhuis said, "they would be huffing and puffing."

Plus, the more participants who run, the better they can continue to fund agriculture education and spread the knowledge of how food is made.

"There is a lot of people that just don't understand what we do, and or how or why we do it," Woodall said. "There are too many people in this world that don't know where their food comes from. We are trying to help correct that."

bed much of the time.

In addition to selling antiques, he was planning to turn his store into an art gallery and maybe even a studio. He dreamed of people being able to visit, sometimes just to sit and look at the paintings which would be hanging on the shop walls.

Instead, he now plans on taking time to care for his wife, who he said just tested positive for COVID-19 while in the hospital. He will also take care of himself, hopeful he will not become ill again.

## HAC:

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Other issues are weightier. Immigration, for example, always is a big topic when it comes up at meetings. Garcia said there was a lot of fear about this issue, especially when Donald Trump became president.

Many people in his community were worried about

a sixth grader and new to this country. Now, she works with students who also are having difficulty with English. Her goal is to continue to guide others and create connections for people.

### 'Naz' Nazario Rivera

Rivera, who has been a HAC member for nearly two years, was interested in the committee prior to



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**Jose Garcia, president of the Hispanic Advisory Committee, poses in front of his building on Monday, Sept. 27, 2021. He also is the program director of the New Horizon Alcohol and Drug Program in Hermiston.**

mass deportations. Rumors spread about local police demanding to see documents and sending them to authorities in Tacoma for deportation.

HAC invited Jason Edmiston, Hermiston's chief of police, to speak on these concerns to an audience of worried people. The chief told them they were not demanding documents or sending people away for deportation.

Garcia's parents retired as migrant workers, and they believed their success was rooted in hard work. He admires their drive, he said, values the Hispanic people as "a driven community" and he intends to do more in the future.

Improved public transportation, safer roads and better sidewalks are all matters Garcia said wants to see in Hermiston.

### 'Abby' Munoz-Reyes

Having recently joined the Hispanic Advisory Committee, Munoz-Reyes has only been to two meetings, but she cares about serving her community.

She works with the migrant education program for the InterMountain Education Service District, mostly helping agricultural and food processing workers. It is a job that relates to her work at HAC; she is serving the same people. The migrant program that covers Umatilla, Morrow, Baker, Union and Wallowa counties.

She said she wanted to join the committee because it aims to improve the lives of Hispanic people. She knows a lot about this community, and she thought she could help. One of the problems among Hispanic people, she said, is they are not always aware of resources available to them.

"We can bring resources to our families, even if it is only one time, it's still something for them," she said.

She said she is proud of being Hispanic and remembers struggling with learning English when she was

joining it. He attended the meetings and believed in its mission. It was, he said, a good way to gain knowledge of the city and resources available. This was especially useful to him in his role as a community health worker; he was able to share information to his clients.

Rivera now is the public health director for Morrow County. He brings his experience to the committee, but he is not just interested in health-related topics. He has enjoyed discussing water prices, the Funland project and more.

Both of his parents come from Mexico, he is bilingual and he is proud of his Latin roots, but he was not always as proud as he is now. It was only in college, when he worked with different groups, that he connected more strongly with his community.

He said that it is easier to connect with his community on the west side of the state. There are more offices there to support Latin people, and more ways to be involved. He hopes he can develop more resources locally so Hermiston has more to offer Hispanic people.

### Agustin Vega-Peters

Vega-Peters, an attorney, is under review to join the committee, but he is no stranger to it. Since the beginning of the year, he has been attending meetings as a spectator. He said one of the most interesting topics lately includes resources made available because of COVID-19. He also appreciated hearing about Martha's House and the Agape House.

He has a history of volunteerism, including helping out with high school camps for students interested in law. As he comes from Salem, he is new to Hermiston and hopes to learn of more ways to be involved in volunteer groups.

He works for Legal Aid Services of Oregon, providing free legal services.

His work specifically is with local farm workers. In this committee, he said he wants to give insight into the law, though he realizes he has a lot to learn. People, he said, need to be heard; he intends to listen.

He said his heritage is somewhat complicated. As a "Mixteco," he is an Indigenous Mexican, and does not usually identify as Hispanic. He does, however, enjoy Mexican culture — music, television, etc. And he speaks Spanish.

### Mark Gomolski

Gomolski is the vice chair of the committee, and he is the only white person on it. He has been on the committee for four years. Also the executive director of Eastern Oregon Mission, he supports Agape House and Martha's house, Hermiston organizations that help needy people. As such, he works alongside many Hispanic people and has several Hispanic clients. He serves Hispanic people, he said.

Hispanic men and women have made a large impact on his life, he said. For example, his first employer was Hispanic. During the seven years he worked for him, the two became good friends. This boss invited him into his home often and made him a godfather to his child.

He also has learned to appreciate Hispanic culture, and he has learned how to cook Mexican food.

Though he does not speak Spanish, he wants to be a conduit between communities. He hopes, for example, he can start a Hispanic art fair to the area. He would invite Hispanic artists and show other people the richness of this amazing culture.

### Lilly Alarcon-Strong

Lilly Alarcon-Strong is not one of the committee members. She is a city representative for the committee, along with Assistant City Manager Mark Morgan and City Councilors Maria Duron and Roy Barron. Alarcon-Strong has been involved with the committee more than six years.

She said she appreciates the committee because it gives Hispanic people opportunity to be involved with their city. Not all people are comfortable talking with the city council or visiting city hall. While the committee meets in city hall, its members can engage with other people about issues in their own language as meetings are bilingual.

She said she looks forward to returning to a pre-pandemic situation. Before COVID-19, HAC meetings were lively and large. Sometimes, 50 or more people would attend the meetings. Nowadays, Hispanic Advisory Committee might only draw a couple of visitors.

Meetings are the third Monday of each month, except June, July, August and December. Start time is 7 p.m. at city hall.

## Store:

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When he started struggling financially, he applied for the Small Business Assistance COVID-19 Disaster Relief loans and two small grants.

"It took over eight weeks for them to get back to me with a denial for the reason they could not verify I was an actual business," he said.

A simple Google search should be enough to prove its existence, he thought.

"I was crushed," he said. "That was the final blow. I appealed, but haven't heard back from them."

### Moving on

Before his most recent COVID-19 infection, he got vaccinated. He obtained the two required shots of the Pfizer vaccine. But that did not keep him from getting his worst case of COVID-19 to that point. Though he feels well now, a month after his positive test, he said he suffered difficulty breathing when he was symptomatic. It was painful, and he was in



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**Dave Bender stands in front of his van outside of his shop, RetroRagz, in Stanfield on Friday, Sept. 26, 2021.**



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