

## The Bridge owners are 'hellbent' to make shift from The Riverside permanent

Sounds of babies and children are now commonplace

By ERICK PETERSON  
Hermiston Herald

UMATILLA — From the outside, The Bridge Bistro & Brews may look like the old Riverside Sports Bar, but it is much different on the inside, and the owners could not be happier about it.

"Things are good," said Paulette Duffloth. She owns the Bridge with her husband Daren Duffloth. They owned The Riverside as well, inheriting it from Daren's father.

She called the transition, which began in May 2020, "wonderful." She also said the community has been very supportive.

The Riverside opened in 1994, and it was a business that supported her family in a town the Duffloths love. It also employed several people, so they do not express any regrets about it. However, they had long wanted to convert the sports bar and strip club to a family-friendly restaurant.

On March 15, 2020, they ended The Riverside due to COVID-19 concerns. They stood in the middle of their business and wondered what they would do.

"We had some hard decisions to make," Paulette said.

They went from making an income to making nothing, and they felt stressed.

Two days after closing, they started renovating without a decision about the business and whether they would make the transition.

Paulette was feeling burnt out by the business. It was never her cup of tea, she said. And while they did not make a statement right away about changing it permanently, she said she was "hellbent" on a big change and she would not go back. The adult business would be no more, forever.

See Bridge, Page A9

## N.W. CRANE SERVICE IN 'BEST POSITION' EVER



Ben Lonergan/East Oregonian  
N.W. Crane Service Inc. employees wait as a crane segment is lowered into position to be attached Sept. 27, 2021, at Kadlec Regional Medical Center in Richland, Washington. The Hermiston-based company has not experienced the staffing issues that are prevalent in other industries as a result of the pandemic.

### Editor's Note

*Editor's note: Today is Part 5 of a five-part series of articles by EO Media Group looking at the lack of workers for jobs in Central, Eastern and Coastal Oregon — why workers are not returning to previously held jobs and how businesses are functioning without being fully staffed. This last segment looks to the future.*

By ERICK PETERSON AND SUZANNE ROIG  
Hermiston Herald

HERMISTON — Not every company is feeling the employment pinch equally, according to some local construction companies and at least one economist.

People at N.W. Crane Service Inc. and other companies say they are not having the same problems with staffing as in other industries. And when they do have personnel issues, they are not related to the pandemic.

"We're blessed," said Ryan Karlson, logistics manager at N.W. Crane Service in Hermiston. Though he credited much of his success to luck, his company's achievements in hiring and maintaining staff seem to be more than a fluke.

First, he said, crane businesses attract a special sort of person. Karlson's company employs 12 crane operators and drivers. Karlson is himself an experienced crane operator and knows a thing or two about this type of worker.

Crane operators, he said, are excited by the challenge of their work. Often, prior to beginning their careers, they looked up at cranes while doing other construction, and they wanted to get behind the



Ben Lonergan/East Oregonian

Riley Sederburg, of Adams, lines up a hydraulic component while working with Hermiston-based N.W. Crane Service Inc. to assemble a crane Sept. 27, 2021, at Kadlec Regional Medical Center in Richland, Washington.

controls of the huge machines.

This desire, he said, is sometimes hidden deep in their hearts. When they finally talk to an employer about crane work, and they learn about the opportunities, they are excited. And when they get a job, often they do not want to leave it.

Being able to offer employees a challenging, fulfilling and enjoyable job, then, accounts for part of N.W. Crane's employment success. This is not the end of the explanation, however.

A major reason Karlson has been able to foster loyalty is because he offers in-house certifications, which employees appreciate.

Certificates are important for crane operators. Many work sites, including ones owned by Amazon, allow only certified workers. And many employers, Karlson said, require employees to find and pay for their own certificates.

He said he suspects his employees appreciate their training, but also other perks. He offers insurance and vacations. Depending on their experience, a new driver can earn \$20 to \$22 per hour. His crane operators can earn \$23 to \$40 or more.

These are nonunion jobs, but Karlson said employees can benefit from not being union members. Union employees, he said, might have to wait years before they can receive crane training. This is not the case for his workers — they can start training right away.

Turnover, then, is low, according to Karlson. His workers appreciate their jobs and the benefits of their labor, so they work well, but this is not all. They did not just start working hard when they joined his company; they started as good workers.

Karlson relies on pre-employment interviews to screen potential employees. Even if he has to do interviews by Zoom, rather than in person, he likes to be able to look a potential employee in the eye. He said he tries to figure their abilities and their character. If he thinks an employee will be a good fit, he said, they usually are.

Karlson said his company is "in the best position we've ever been," and this is during a pandemic

See Workers, Page A9

## Morrow County Harvest Festival was a success, organizer says

Event returned after missing 2020

By ERICK PETERSON  
Hermiston Herald

BOARDMAN — More than 1,000 people showed up Saturday, Oct. 2, for the return of the Morrow County Harvest Festival.

The SAGE Center in Boardman was the site for the eighth festival, which went on hiatus in 2020 due to the pandemic. Harvest Festival ran 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., and Breena Beck, SAGE Center assistant manager, said she was happy to bring back the Harvest Festival for its eighth year and set an attendance goal of 1,000.

Attendance neared that mark by 2 p.m.

"We're so excited to be back in full force," Beck said.

Pleasant weather — temperatures were in the 70s — helped make the Harvest Festival a success, according to Beck, and the vendors created fun for people. New vendors included



Ben Lonergan/Hermiston Herald

Anthony Licea, 12, paints a pumpkin Saturday, Oct. 2, 2021, during the Morrow County Harvest Festival at the SAGE Center in Boardman.

sign makers, jewelers and clothing makers. Beck said she believes lockdowns may have inspired people.

"I think the quarantines have brought out the makers in all of us," she said.

The number of returning vendors was another point of pride, Beck said.

Around 30 vendors — including general vendors, food vendors and volunteer groups at Kid's Corner — participated in the festival.

That was a drop from 2019, when 40 vendors set up, although Beck said the decline was expected as Harvest Festival was using only its outdoor space. Organizers closed off the inside area because of the pandemic.

Live music, mule-drawn wagon rides, food and children's activities were present. There also was a pine-wood derby race, which was new to the festival. Sponsors included Amazon Web Services, Lamb Weston, Threemile Canyon Farms and Wildhorse Resort & Casino.

Sierra Simmons, Irrigon High School sophomore, was among local 4-H members who were in attendance. Simmons was showing goats and cattle, which she described as "pretty fun." She said she especially liked introducing the animals to small children who had never seen such critters up close.

Harold Rietmann, Ione resident and self-described hobbyist, brought his woodcrafts to the Harvest Festival. Among the items he was selling were earrings and necklaces. He said he started this work

in the 1980s and began selling his products at events in 2010.

Rietmann said he has been to all of the festivals, since they began. He goes to local craft bazaars, and this one is "very good," he said.

Gracie Krahn, Linn-Benton Community College sophomore and 2021 Oregon Dairy Princess Ambassador, was among the people who had a booth at the festival. She visited Boardman on her tour of state fairs, summer camps and other events. Krahn, an Albany resident, said she was having a good time.

"I love this event," she said. "I've been able to connect with little ones and others, all the way up to grandmas and grandpas. It's been an outstanding afternoon."

Linda Mackey, owner of The Natural Maximum of Washington, boasted being at Harvest Festival each year since it began. A Prosser, Washington, resident, she said she was glad to be outside in beautiful weather. Most years, she said, the weather has been windy and unpleasant.

See Festival, Page A9

### INSIDE

A3 ▶ Three new peer centers open in Umatilla County

A6 ▶ New "Eminent Oregonians" book tells Oregon history

A7 ▶ Shannon's AmazBalls is prepping for Christmas

A8 ▶ Junk Barn Girls was a hit for participants