



Columbia River  
**Gorge**  
**Business**  
Review

**COR Cellars**  
**Winery of**  
**the Year**  
**12**

February 2014

Covering Gorge Business

Volume 6, No. 2

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# Columbia River Gorge Business Review

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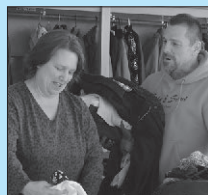


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### HOMELESS SHELTER OPENS

Father's House Fellowship has recently completed Goldendale's only emergency homeless shelter.

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# As Odell grows, a boundary is drawn

By BEN MITCHELL

ODELL — Hood River may get a lot of attention, but the unincorporated community of Odell is also a happening place.

Though it is not an incorporated city like Hood River, according to the 2010 U.S. Census, Odell has 2,225 residents — twice as many as Cascade Locks, which is the only other incorporated city in Hood River County. Odell is also a relatively young community as well, with approximately a third of its population 18 years of age or younger.

Hood River County Community Development reports Odell also has more residential units than Cascade Locks, but currently has a vacancy rate of 0 percent. Odell, which saw its population grow by 22 percent between the 2000 and 2010 Census, is matching the growth rate of its much larger neighbor to the north, Hood River, and is exceeding the 10 percent overall growth rate of the county.

As Odell continues to grow, so does the importance of urban planning. And since the state requires Oregon counties to draw boundaries around unincorporated communities, it has tasked Hood River County with drawing one for the Odell area as well.

Hood River County Community Development Director Mike Benedict explained the rationale of the state's requirement.

"Oregon land use law separates areas between rural and urban. 'If you're outside an urban area, then you're rural,'

he said. "The state recognized there are all these areas that are urban in nature, but are rural, so the state developed the unincorporated community boundary."

Odell fits that definition. In addition to all the families that call Odell home, the community boasts 46 employers, including three fruit packers, and has the largest total acreage of land zoned for industrial use in the county according to Community Development's data.

However, what Benedict says Odell does lack is affordable workforce housing, particularly multi-family dwellings, resulting in over 83 percent of those employed at Odell businesses to live outside of the community. Benedict explained that state law allows for smaller lot sizes within the limits of unincorporated communities, and would allow landowners to split up their lots. The boundary would also codify which properties in the future are eligible to connect to the Odell sewer system, allowing service providers to plan for future demand.

The county made efforts to establish the boundary system back in the mid-2000s, but the project was eventually moved to the back burner. According to an August 2005 story published in the News, some Odell residents opposed the plan, worried that the mid valley would become over-developed and lose its rural qualities.

Others, particularly orchard owners, may balk at the fact that some land zoned ex-

clusive farm use in Odell will wind up within the boundary and would have to be rezoned as the state does not allow EFU land to exist inside an unincorporated community. The county is considering three boundaries, the largest of which comprises 1,377 acres and the entire Odell Sanitation District (the sewer district), but would also include 816 acres currently zoned EFU.

On the other hand, the largest boundary would also allow orchardists to more freely develop their land, and provide more labor for the packing houses where many orchardists send their fruit. The point is probably moot, though, as Benedict said the largest boundary option would likely be met with disapproval as the state does not allow much "resource land" to be brought into the boundary without going through an exceptions process.

No decision has been made yet on which option will be sent to the state for approval and the county is still seeking public input on the process. A public meeting on the boundaries was held in Odell last month and drew 60 people and the county reports at least one more public meeting on the subject is planned.

Those who wish to submit comments on the different boundary options have until Feb. 14 to do so. Benedict reported that the county will later submit the selected boundary to the state Land Conservation and Development Commission for final approval.



Hood River County is looking at zoning updates to plan for the diverse growth needs in Odell, a rural community with abutting open spaces, an agricultural-based industrial complex, and residential areas.

PHOTO BY KIRBY NEUMANN-REA

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# Homeless shelter opens

By JUSTIN BRIMER

GOLDENDALE — Golden-dale's homeless now have a warm place to sleep, a kitchen to prepare food and a place to shower and do laundry.

A local church, with help from the community and former recipients of aid, can offer emergency shelter, a hand up and hope for the homeless.

Father's House Fellowship has recently completed Golden-dale's only emergency homeless shelter.

The church has long offered services to the area's needy. Its basement, in the building of the former Goldendale Christian School, is a mini-social services office. It has a large room of clean, warm clothes, to anyone in need, a kitchen open to people who need hot food and rooms that have doubled as storage and boarding facilities for those in need.

After completing a bathroom remodel and accepting donations of beds and bedding following a Dec. 18 article in The Sentinel, the church can officially accept a small family that has nowhere else to go.

This, coupled with other services in Goldendale, has helped those on the brink of homelessness return to successful lives in this community.

Tammy Nadler was a meth addict for more than 20 years before a persistent church visitor helped turn her life around.

"This lady from the church kept coming by my apartment and knocking, and knocking, and knocking," she says. "And I was always high and didn't want to answer it."

Nadler recalls she was living with her daughter and had been given an eviction notice. She was on the brink of homelessness.

She finally answered the door.

Nadler accepted the invitation to visit Father's House of Fellowship, which soon turned into her home while she battled the demons of addiction, she recalls.

She sent her daughter to live with her mother but couldn't

quite kick the meth habit.

"Then one day the church elders brought me into their office and said, 'Look, we know you're still on drugs; either shape up or ship out,' she recalls.

"I knew what meth had given me, and I knew it wasn't good," she says as she folds clothes in the church's large clothing storage room. "So I got help, turned my life around, and never once looked back."

Nadler has been working at that church for more than three years, organizing and running the offices.

She says a transitional housing program offered by the Washington Gorge Action Programs was imperative to her improvement. Once off meth for six months, WGAP offered her a free place to live for two years.

Now she spends her days helping the church that brought her back from a tailspin that was spiraling toward homelessness.

She also volunteers for A Hand Up, a service from local churches that offers one-time or short-term monetary aid. "They can pay for a prescription, or gas money to get to a job interview," Adler says, "or maybe even a motel room for a night."

"I know how much it can mean, because I've been the one calling that line," she adds.

Clean and dry: Father's House Fellowship has expanded its reach in the Goldendale community. In addition to addressing the spiritual needs of residents, it also provides for the physical needs — showers, laundry facilities and clean, dry clothing.

David Blomeley, who helped remodel the church bathroom and prepared the beds for homeless families, stands nearby and nods. Like Adler, he now works at the church that offered him a hand up and joins many other Goldendale residents offering short- and long-term solutions to homelessness.

Father's House of Fellowship, 207 S. Klickitat Ave., can offer a needy person or family a safe, warm place to sleep and prepare meals for one or two nights.

The Goldendale Ministerial Association offers financial help on the A Hand Up telephone line at 509-250-1604. Its motto is "A poor man called and the Lord heard him; he saved him out of all his troubles," Psalm 34:6. Calls are answered by volunteers; or callers can leave a message detailing their need.



Photo by Justin Brimer

Lives transformed: Tammy Nadler and David Blomeley sort clothing at Father's House's new homeless shelter.

# Tech Jobs Bring High Wages to the Gorge

The Gorge Technology Alliance recently collected data about the economic impact of the unmanned aerial system, or UAS, industry in the region. Within the GTA's five-county area of Hood River, Wasco and Sherman counties in Oregon and Klickitat and Skamania counties in Washington, GTA companies who work in or supply the UAS industry employ just over 1,000 people with an average annual pay of around \$68,000.

"While many people know about Insitu and their impact on the region," says GTA Executive Director Jessica Metta, "we wanted to pull together this information to help shed light on the full impact of all

Gorge companies working in the industry and the importance of tech jobs here."

Other UAS companies and those who supply the industry in the region include Aerovel, American Aerospace Engineering, Cloud Cap Technology, Hood Technology, Sagetech Corporation, Sightline Applications, Trillium Engineering, Custom Interface Inc., Innovative Composite Engineering, Prigel Machine and Fabrication, Real Carbon and Zepher.

While some suppliers, such as Innovative Composite Engineering, have a small percentage of their overall business dedicated to UAS, others have a majority of their production focused on UAS.

"Since the \$68,000 figure is an average, there are employees making more and less than that. Some of our tech companies offer nationally competitive salaries (which are high for the region) for jobs they recruit for nationally, such as engineers," says Metta.

The GTA worked with the Oregon and Washington employment departments to collect data about payroll and employment for other well-known industries in the Gorge in order to draw comparisons. Tourism and agriculture have much larger employment numbers regionally, at around 4,200 and 5,600 respectively,

Continued on TECH page 6

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# Progress made on Hanford cleanup, but challenges remain

By BEN MITCHELL

HOOD RIVER — It's been almost 25 years since the U.S. Department of Energy, the Environmental Protection Agency and the Washington Department of Ecology entered into an agreement to clean up the Hanford Site — widely considered to be the most contaminated nuclear site in the nation.

The 586-square-mile site located on the Columbia River north of Washington's Tri-Cities was responsible for producing most of the plutonium for the U.S. nuclear weapons program during the Cold War, as well as hundreds of billions of gallons of hazardous waste before production ended and cleanup began in 1989.

Two-and-a-half decades later, the estimated date for the cleanup's completion is still almost 35 years away and could

possibly stretch longer due to delays.

Progress, however gradual, is being made on decommissioning the site, though. On Jan. 13, the Oregon Hanford Cleanup Board — a 20-member advisory panel made up of state, tribal, and citizen members — met at the Best Western Hood River Inn to listen to presentations on the cleanup efforts.

The venue, which lies a stone's throw from the Columbia, was a fitting one as the Oregon Department of Energy has cited that its primary role is "to ensure that cleanup decisions are protective of the Columbia River."

One of those decisions pertains to how the USDOE can stanch the bleeding of hexavalent chromium from out of the Hanford Site and into the groundwater supply that feeds

into the Columbia about two and a half hours northeast of Hood River. Hexavalent chromium is often used, as it was at Hanford, to help stop corrosion in metal piping, but is a known carcinogen.

Ken Niles, administrator of the ODOE, reported that crews are currently digging pits upwards of 85 feet deep to remove the chromium plumes and noted that the efforts had "tremendously reduced the amount of chromium in the river." However, Dale Engstrom, natural resource specialist with ODOE, reported that chromium is "on a good day, very challenging to remove."

In addition to the ongoing chemical removal, Niles reported two structures in the "300" area of the facility were scheduled for removal by the end of the month. The struc-

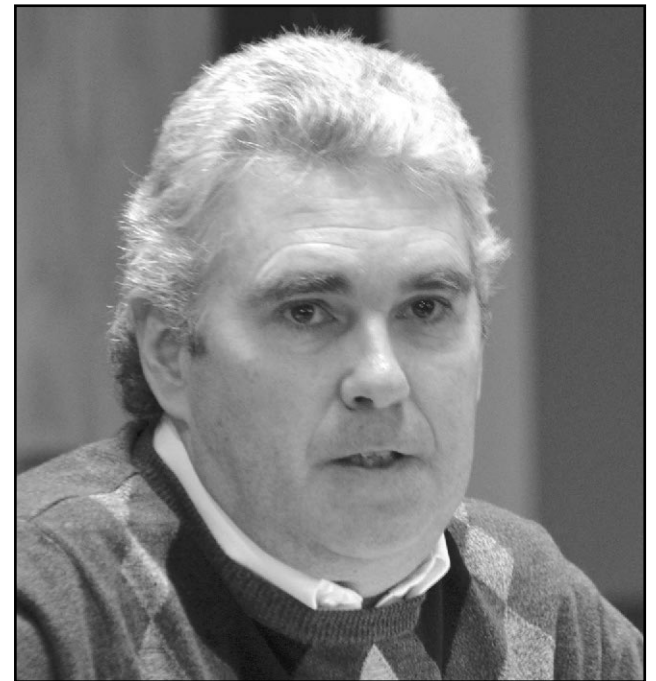
tures include a defunct underground plutonium test reactor as well as a vault containing two 15,000-gallon tanks that once accepted laboratory waste.

Niles said the structures were responsible for a good deal of contamination in that particular area of the facility.

Despite the progress, the USDOE lists 67 single-shell waste storage tanks as "assumed leakers" and one tank with an active leak.

Back in early 2013, it was thought six single-shell tanks were actively leaking, but USDOE recently determined that only one tank, T-111, was actively leaking.

Niles reported that progress on cleanup could be hindered as states continue to battle each other for federal funding for polluted sites.



Ken Niles

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# The Chocolate Lab opens in The Dalles

By KATHY URSPRUNG

THE DALLES — Sunde Carroll brings gourmet chocolate to The Dalles from all over the world and she wants you to try it at The Chocolate Lab.

Her new shop, featuring not only high-quality chocolates (or cacao) but also infused sea salts, opened Dec. 1 at 214 Washington St. She hopes her store will play a role in helping enliven downtown The Dalles.

"I'm wanting The Dalles to pick up and become a new scene," she said.

Carroll describes herself as a "chocolate gourmand." As such, she hopes to bring the experience of fine chocolate to people from all around.

"I have a love for chocolate," she said. "And because I am a gourmand, I love the pairing of things."

Wine is the primary pairing. On this particular day, a bottle of Quenett red sits on the counter next to a selection of chocolate bars infused with flavors like pear and almond, ready to complement one another.

"I'm in communication with all the local vineyards to do pairings with them," she said.

Art also adds to the experience. Her shop is adorned with the work of local and regional artists, which she also sells.

Carroll's colorfully packaged and artfully designed chocolates are made by private chocolatiers.

"I order them fresh and they make them as soon as I order," she said.

They also make her signature chocolate-covered caramels, which are topped with a dusting of applewood-smoked sea salt. It's an Italian gray sea salt with a distinctly smoky flavor, designed to enhance the caramel and chocolate.

The caramels are one of the most popular items in the store, as are the wild balsamic cherries — wild Italian cherries macerated in eight-year-old balsamic vinegar in a dark chocolate shell.

Her selection also includes choices from more than 50 fine and unique chocolatiers from around the world. If even the darkest chocolates seem creamy in texture, Carroll credits the use of raw, organic cacao.

"From bean to bar, that's really the healthiest way to go

when you're considering chocolate these days," she said.

Carroll, also an experienced personal trainer, has helped clients with special health considerations choose healthful and safe chocolate selections. For example, someone on a diet may need something a little sweet, but also need a bar high in antioxidants. Someone with allergies to chocolate may be affected by milk or peanuts. Carroll says she has solutions for those challenges, too.

"I've made sure that on the shelves and in the store we have chocolate for everyone," she said.

Carroll also stocks a broad range of sea salts from around the world, among them a popular pinot noir salt, Meyer lemon and even black truffle sea salt from Italy with a rich and strong flavor.

"It only takes a little," Carroll said.

She also stocks Himalayan salt blocks designed for cooking in the oven or on the grill, and salted shot glasses.

"You just lick them and drink," she said.

She also sells related cookbooks.

Remodeling at the shop — once home to a barber, then a tailor — was done entirely by Carroll.

"I've completely transformed the whole place," she said.

It now holds the ambience of an "old-world confectionery," wrote one reviewer, with fresh flowers enhancing the lobby daily.

In addition to the tasting that goes on through the day, Carroll also offers private tastings featuring chocolate-wine pairings. She also creates special-order gift boxes, which she will even deliver.

The Chocolate Lab is open 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday and Sunday from noon to 5 p.m. During the summer, she will be open seven days a week.

Reach Carroll by phone at 541-340-0806, email at thechocolatelab@yahoo.com and on Facebook as "The Chocolate Lab."



Photo by Kathy Ursprung

Sunde Carroll brings gourmet chocolate to The Dalles from all over the world.

## TECH

Continued from page 4

but their average pay is much lower. Average annual pay in tourism jobs is only about \$17,000 while agriculture employment averages \$24,000 annually. Health care jobs are also significant in the region with 4,400 employees in 2012. Although these are some of the highest paid jobs available regionally, averaging about \$44,000 annually, this figure is still far below the average annual pay of the UAS companies and suppliers.

"The reason in part why this region has done better than state averages during this last recession is because of the diversity in our economy," says Metta. "Tourism, agriculture, health care, high tech — all the industries in the region are important to keeping the economy moving." She went on to note how the regional thinking in economic development has helped move the Gorge to this positive place. "The work by Mid-Columbia Eco-

nomic Development District in particular to help diversify the region's economy and start groups like the Gorge Tech Alliance is a benefit to the region."

Currently, the GTA is starting work with Mid-Columbia Economic Development District (MCEDD) on a new grant MCEDD was awarded from the U.S. Economic Development Administration, known as the Investing in Manufacturing Communities Partnership. The purpose of the grant is to further diversify the region's manufacturers, focused on the UAS companies and value-added food manufacturers. GTA Executive Director Jessica Metta also recently joined the Board of the Oregon UAS Business Enterprise, a new organization that received a grant from the Oregon Innovation Council to grow the UAS industry in Oregon. "With much of Oregon's UAS business happening in the Gorge, it's a great way to keep our local companies connected with state initiatives." Much of the heightened focus on the UAS industry is in preparation for an announce-

ment expected by the end of the year from the Federal Aviation Administration designating six UAS test sites in the nation as part of the path to integrate UAS into the national air space.

The Gorge Technology Alliance is a nonprofit professional organization that supports, connects and develops the broadly-defined technology community of the Columbia River Gorge, from the UAS companies to software developers, website builders, advanced manufacturers, IT and telecom providers. The GTA does this through networking and educational events, workforce development and business support and promotion. Since 2009, the GTA has also supported youth technology education in the Gorge through robotics and will again be hosting the FIRST LEGO League tournaments in The Dalles and Hood River in December.

Learn more about the GTA at [crgta.org](http://crgta.org) or contact Jessica Metta with questions at 541-296-2266.

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# Salmon recovery efforts moving ahead in local, east watersheds

## Compost pickup in Bingen complicated

By SVERRE BAKKE

UNDERWOOD — The Klickitat Lead Entity for salmon recovery efforts in this part of the state has been working on state grant-funded projects since 1999. In that time, 52 projects processed through the Klickitat County agency have been funded by the state Salmon Recovery Funding Board. Those projects represent a state investment of \$8.5 million and an additional \$2.5 million in project sponsor match.

This year, another \$648,150 in grant aid and more than \$141,000 in sponsor matches will be spent on four projects under the auspices of the Klickitat Lead Entity. The Underwood Conservation District secured grants for two projects in the White Salmon River watershed: restoring fish passage on Mill Creek in eastern Skamania County (\$55,000) and developing restoration projects on Rattlesnake Creek (\$80,000). The Columbia Land Trust has been granted \$477,650 to continue with its restoration of riparian and floodplain habitat along the Klickitat River.

Another grant, for \$35,500, was awarded to the Eastern Klickitat Conservation District to assess the feasibility of buying a voluntary land preservation agreement along Rock Creek and its tributary, Squaw Creek, from a private landowner.

John Foltz is the project coordinator for the Klickitat Lead Entity, which is part of the county's Natural Resources De-

partment. He said the general assessment among the experts is that these local projects have benefitted local citizens, the environment, the economy, and salmon and steelhead and their habitat.

"It is tough to quantify the benefit to salmon and steelhead, as it takes time to show quantifiable results due to many compounding factors," Foltz noted. "Our local technical experts do believe that the projects that have been completed and are ongoing do provide a benefit to these species."

### Underwood

#### Conservation District

Through an SRFB application process that started last spring, the Underwood Conservation District refined and adapted its projects along the entire journey, working back and forth with the local Technical Advisory Committee, the Citizens Review Committee, and state reviewers, according to District Manager Tova Tillinghast.

"It's a good process for getting important feedback from knowledgeable experts in the field of restoration and for polishing a good idea into a project that is designed to succeed," Tillinghast noted.

The two Underwood Conservation District-sponsored projects that received approval from the SRFB are planning projects, "so we don't plan to conduct construction on either with this grant funding," Tillinghast said.

Preliminary work on the Mill Creek and Rattlesnake Creek

projects is under way, though. Last month the Conservation District issued a request for proposals to design engineering firms for the Mill Creek culvert project. Mill Creek is a tributary of the White Salmon River. The culvert at issue diverts water under Skamania County's Lakeview Road but is considered a barrier to fish passage because of its high outfall and steep grade.

Tillinghast noted that the district has secured \$50,000 in matching funds from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for the culvert project, "which is allowing us to get a jump-start on that work before we have our SRFB agreement in place."

The Conservation District will use its \$55,000 grant to assess the feasibility of and complete conceptual designs for replacing the Mill Creek culvert. Moreover, the district estimates removal of the fish passage barrier under Lakeview Road will open up about 4.5 miles of habitat in a high-priority reach under the Klickitat Lead Entity Region Salmon Recovery Strategy. A prior inventory of barriers in the White Salmon River watershed identified replacement of the culvert as the highest priority.

"With the amount of interest out there to see salmonid recolonization in the White Salmon River and its tributaries, it shouldn't be a problem acquiring construction funding for the Mill Creek project," Tillinghast said. "The hardest part will be to get the multiple funding partners lined out for the

same timeframe; that's one of the joys of grant management."

Species that could use the creek for habitat include Columbia River bull trout, middle Columbia River steelhead, and lower Columbia River coho and chinook salmon, all of which are listed as threatened with the risk of extinction under the federal Endangered Species Act, as well as cutthroat trout and lamprey.

The Rattlesnake Creek project will be focused on identifying specific, feasible projects to enhance salmon habitat throughout this sub-watershed. Tillinghast said the district will be reaching out to private landowners for their help in developing concepts and initiating design work or permitting on projects that are expected to provide habitat for threatened mid-Columbia steelhead.

"Projects may take many forms, from in-stream habitat construction, to side channel enhancement, to removing noxious weeds, to native planting along stream banks," she noted.

Tillinghast, moreover, doesn't anticipate the district will have problems obtaining additional funding "for the on-the-ground work down the road."

"With SRFB grant rounds every year and other interested partners, like Yakama Nation Fisheries, we should be able to get a lot of good work done over the next few years for salmon recovery in the White Salmon River watershed," she said.

By AMBER MARRA

BINGEN — The company out of The Dalles that has its eye on compost in the Bingen and White Salmon area has several hoops to jump through before pickup can continue at private residences.

Dirt Hugger, which currently operates out of The Dalles but is in the process of relocating to Dallesport, entered into a franchise agreement with White Salmon late in 2013 to collect compost from homes at \$7.50 per can.

During the scheduled pickups of yard debris every other week from Nov. 20 to Jan. 2, Dirt Hugger served a total of three homes in White Salmon. Compost collection was also scheduled for mid-March through July, but that is now dependent on its licensing situation.

The company hoped to duplicate the service in Bingen, but hit a snag when it came to pass at a recent Bingen City Council meeting that Dirt Hugger would need a solid waste certificate from the Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission to do any hauling in town.

"If you're picking up any kind of recycling or compost from a residence you must have a solid waste carrier certificate. If you're just picking up from businesses you would only need a common carrier certificate," said Jan Brending, Bingen city administrator. "Technically for them to be hauling in the state of Washington they would have to have one or both of these certificates."

When Dirt Hugger collected compost in White Salmon a 1981 pickup truck was used, according to Pierce Louis, owner of Dirt

Hugger. Even so, his company would have to obtain the necessary permits to gather compost in Bingen, but could also sign on with an existing licensed garbage service to haul for them.

"We could get an existing carrier to offer the service because they're already licensed. We don't necessarily want to be haulers; we just don't want the material that creates methane going into the landfill," Louis said at the council meeting. "Our whole mission is to make compost, so we don't care who hauls it."

In order to obtain a solid waste certificate, Dirt Hugger will first have to check with Bingen Garbage Service and Republic Services of Klickitat County, which covers White Salmon's garbage needs, to see if either company would like to haul compost. If both companies decline, Dirt Hugger can apply for the necessary certificate to haul compost in Washington.

Louis said he has approached Bingen Garbage Service about hauling compost in the past and that there was no interest, but he intends on asking both companies again.

Patrick Munyan, White Salmon city administrator and public works director, said since Dirt Hugger and the city are currently in a franchise agreement the company can currently pick up compost in White Salmon until the city's trash authority is transferred over to the UTC. At that point, which Munyan said will probably be in March, Dirt Hugger would have to seek a solid waste certificate to collect compost in White Salmon if neither garbage company is interested in hauling compost.



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Haley E. Hunt, DMD, stands in front of her new office in The Dalles.

PHOTO BY KATHY URSPRUNG

## Hunt purchases dental practice in The Dalles

By Kathy Ursprung

THE DALLES — Haley E. Hunt, DMD, has purchased the dental practice of Dr. William Guth, who retired at the end of December after 17 years in the community.

Hunt will continue to operate from the dental office at 501 E. Seventh St., near the county annex.

Hunt, who grew up in Florence, graduated from Colorado State University with high scholastic honors, while also competing as a track and field athlete and qualifying for the 2005 NCAA National Championship in the hammer throw.

She returned to Oregon to attend dental school at Oregon

Health and Science University in Portland.

Hunt comes from a long line of dentists.

"My grandfather was a dentist, so was my dad, and me," she said. "And my brother graduated in June from dentistry school."

She worked with her father in Florence for about two and a half years before setting out on her own.

"It was time to find a place I really loved to live," she said.

The Dalles was a good fit.

"The water and the outdoor activities," were draws, Hunt said. "And my fiancé's family is from eastern Washington. It's a good spot where we can be close to both our families."

Hunt loves to ski and hike, while her fiancé enjoys hunting and fishing.

"I'm really pleased with the practice," she said. "Dr. Guth has a great reputation. He did great work and really has a well-running practice."

While she said Guth's practice is pretty up-to-date, she still has some technology improvements in mind.

"I want to bring in digital x-rays so I can let the patient see what I'm seeing," Hunt said.

She also has plenty of room for more patients, and would like to grow the practice.

"I do a little bit of everything here," she said, including family dentistry, cosmetic procedures,

extractions, partials and dentures. Eventually, she hopes to become trained in placement of implants, too.

Hunt's practice also has room for growth, so she is hoping to attract some new patients. Lack of insurance needn't always be a barrier, she noted.

"A lot of people think if they don't have insurance, they can't get dental work," she said, but that's not the case. Hunt plans to start a patient loyalty program where patients can pay on a monthly fee basis to cover the cost of cleaning and a check-up.

Hunt's office hours are Monday through Thursday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Her office can be reached by phone at 541-298-4411.

## 2013 AG REPORT 'We need to use tools in the right way'

Despite some unique challenges cropping up the past 12 months, Oregon agriculture generally remains in great shape and is poised to do well again in 2014, according to Katy Coba, director of the Oregon Department of Agriculture.

Coba, approaching her 12th year as director, remains optimistic about the opportunities facing the state's farmers, ranchers, and others.

Coba's comments are part of an interview assessing Oregon agriculture and ODA. In part one of the interview, she focuses on issues related to the agriculture industry as a whole:

### What kind of year was 2013 for Oregon agriculture?

I would say 2013 was an interesting year. We had a number of events that pressed the industry and the department, and we worked together to address those issues. I'm hopeful 2014 is a little more normal. Looking from the production side of Oregon agriculture in 2013, it was another record year with about \$5.4 billion in production value. We have just been blessed, in general, with good weather. We saw market prices that are holding firm. We continue to see that steady growth coming out of the economic downturn in 2008. Most of the sectors of agriculture are really doing well. That's what we like to see. We hope that trend continues in 2014.

### What was the most challenging issue for Oregon agriculture this past year?

The discovery of genetically modified wheat in an Oregon field was definitely a very tense and

trying time for the wheat industry, for ODA, for USDA, and for our neighboring states. It was particularly challenging because a couple of key export markets in Asia do not accept GM crops. When it's a federal investigation, there is a lot of information that cannot be shared, or there is information that can be shared with a state agency but not with our growers. That was frustrating for our growers. We just tried to maintain as much communication as we could. In hindsight, the whole discovery and investigation went as well as we could hope. The focus was on getting the Asian markets back open. It was just a very short period of time when the markets were closed. So far, shipments of our wheat to Asia are moving and prices are holding steady. The incident was a huge challenge for us and has raised to the next level the whole focus around genetically engineered agricultural products.

### What do you see happening in 2014 with the issue of genetically modified organisms?

The genetically engineered discussion is not going away. Because of the measure in Jackson County that will be on the ballot in May, and because of the legislation that passed during the September special session providing a statewide preemption of any local regulation of genetically engineered products — with the exception of Jackson County — the governor signed the bill but agreed to pull together a task force to look at a potential statewide policy or if there should be statewide regulation of genetically engineered agriculture. That

Continued on REPORT page 10



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## BREWERY BOXES

Full Sail Brewery's new packaging line, known as the "box shop," is up and running in the newly expanded section (formerly Dakine) of the plant on Columbia Avenue. Colin Godkin, right, and Javier Salgado discuss Tuesday's orders at the point where just-created six-pack containers are lowered into just-erected cases which then return to the bottling section. By using bulk glass and erecting "flat" cardboard packaging in-house, Full Sail is consolidating its storage, packaging, bottling and shipping functions under one roof.

PHOTO BY KIRBY NEUMANN-REA

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# 'Agora' program connects gifts to programs

By KATHY URSPRUNG

THE DALLES — Maggie Hanna has what might be seen as an enviable job: She oversees a process that helps people doing good works within Gorge communities find other people willing to help pay for that effort.

Hanna is a RARE (Resource Assistance for Rural Environments) planner for Mid-Columbia Economic District who oversees the agency's Agora program. Agora is a computer platform that helps connect local communities with funders who span the public, private and philanthropic sectors.

"In ancient Greece, an agora was a physical location where people come together to buy and trade goods," Hanna explained, in other words, a marketplace. "It was also big for politics and sharing of ideas — it was the center of town."

The modern Agora computer platform is a virtual marketplace where community organizations can shop around their

projects and prioritize their needs, Hanna said, while potential funders can compare those projects and needs with their own funding priorities.

"What's exciting about the platform is that it brings together public and private philanthropic money and the projects that need it," Hanna said. "The projects are specifically from nonprofit and government agencies ... It's bringing the right people and the right resources together."

Hanna describes it as the philanthropic version of match.com. The organizations seeking money create a listing based on standardized listing criteria that funders can use to vet projects.

For example, a funding pool specifically earmarked for use in the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area might be linked with hiking trail projects, she said.

"(Projects and funders) can also be linked by deal size, geography and sector," Hanna

said.

Agora itself is a beneficiary of philanthropic funding. It's part of a project created by the Meyer Memorial Trust. It is aimed at bringing together seven key sectors identified as vital to a healthy community and economy:

- entrepreneurial environment
- financial capital
- infrastructure
- innovation capacity
- quality of life
- regulatory environment
- workforce

Potential capital sources can include grants, equity, tax equity and debt.

"Mid-Columbia Economic Development District is working on a comprehensive economic development strategy through the Agora platform," Hanna said. "It's an exciting way to connect to a bigger process."

Each of the counties — Wasco, Hood River, Sherman, Klickitat and Skamania — within the district's five-county

region goes through a process of identifying needs and issues, Hanna said.

"They will come together in an overall region-wide plan," Hanna said. "Each of the projects will be outlined on the platform. They will also be prioritized so the states of Oregon and Washington can see the projects prioritized by MCEDD."

Mid-Columbia Economic Development District is receiving some of the first access to the platform, Hanna noted. It is serving as the pilot project with the goal of eventually rolling it out to all of Oregon and Washington.

Not only can potential funders reach out to the owners of projects that fall in line with their goals, project owners can reach out to funders. It's a more active way of beginning the communication process with funders, Hanna said.

"The other really exciting thing for rural communities is that it offers a really user-friendly way to gain visibility,

whether with other organizations and project owners, or with funders around the state," Hanna said. "They can communicate directly through the platform."

She describes the communication process as similar to Linked In.

Hanna's main job is helping

people get their projects listed on the platform. She is also spreading the word about Agora to local organizations and agencies and is available for group presentations.

For more information, contact Hanna at [maggie@mcedd.org](mailto:maggie@mcedd.org) or 541-296-2266.



Maggie Hanna

## REPORT

Continued from page 8

work is going to start in January. There will be a focused and concentrated effort on this discussion. This isn't only happening in Oregon. It's happening at the national level, it's happening in other states. There is the issue of required GM labeling of foods — we've seen initiatives in California and Washington be defeated.

We are waiting to see if a similar initiative will be filed in Oregon. There is discussion at the national level on whether there should be national labeling of ge-

netically engineered products. This, I would say, is going to be the number-one topic we will see related to agriculture in 2014.

**What other high-profile issues do you expect to see in the new year?**

Pesticides would be another key issue. There is continued concern in the Triangle Lake area of Lane County about aerial applications of pesticides and the ongoing state and federal investigation to see if there is some kind of human health impacts related to the use of pesticides in that area.

The issue has also been raised

in other communities, most recently Curry County, where concerned citizens have now petitioned the federal government to come in and do a similar analysis. It's a very difficult and emotional issue. There are some that believe passionately that pesticides are dangerous to your health, even though science often times shows a different outcome.

From an industry perspective, we have to be sensitive to the public. We have to make sure we are using our tools in the right way. We have to be vigilant in making sure that is happening. I would say, for the most part, in-

dustry does that. But we also have to be sensitive to our neighbors. If we have concerns like these that are raised and we are not being sensitive or not addressing them, I think it's a detriment to the industry.

**What key ag issues do you see Congress and federal officials addressing in 2014?**

The Farm Bill, are we ever going to get one? That's the big question. We saw, for the first time, a democratically controlled senate and a republican controlled house at the federal level that basically ripped the Farm Bill apart. It appears, due to late

negotiations in 2013, there may be something close to a compromise whereby the Farm Bill can go forward. We have gone just about as far as we can in agriculture without one. For us, in Oregon, the support of specialty crops, the research component, and the conservation title are all very important. We just have to get a bill passed.

Immigration reform is another thing that I would put on my wish list for 2014. It seems like we've come close a number of times. Now, who knows?

The other federal issue I would raise is the Food Safety Moderniza-

tion Act. FDA has now put out five draft rules. ODA has been instrumental in a national coalition providing comments on those rules. Food safety is incredibly important. No grower wants to be the one whose product has caused illness among consumers. We are united on doing everything we can to prevent food borne illness. The trick is in the how and getting that nailed down correctly. That's been the big challenge. So we'll continue to pay a lot of attention to those efforts in 2014.

For part two of the interview, visit [hoodrivernews.com](http://hoodrivernews.com).



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# Gorge Soup is on Feb. 20 Work group recommends changes to city policy

By KIRBY NEUMANN-REA

HOOD RIVER — Gorge Soup is on, with changes.

Gorge Soup for Kids dinner will be Feb. 20, a chance for young people to win funding for a business or project.

This year, organizers have announced that Gorge Soup for Kids will allow students to apply for community initiative or the start-up of their business.

Some examples: an individual or group of students doing a public art installation, a charity fundraiser, or a plan to involve people in the community.

In another change: The dinner price will be reduced to \$25 from \$30.

Gorge Soup has issued flyers in Spanish and English, and is asking community members, groups or businesses to sponsor the event for \$100. One of purposes of these sponsorships is to offset the cost of tickets for the presenters and their parents to ensure that cost is not a limiting factor for children to apply to participate. Sponsorships also add to the amount of dollars that are awarded to fund student businesses.

Applications for Gorge Soup for Kids are due postmarked by Feb. 5. They are available at Gorge Soup, 14 Oak St., Ste. 302, Hood River, OR 97031. Late or incomplete applications will not be accepted.

The event is quite simple, according to co-founder Julie O'Shea. Each person attending buys a ticket. The ticket covers a few expenses — usually about \$8 per person for the meal. The rest of the ticket money goes into a collective jar. Throughout the soup dinner, a selection of student entrepreneurs from the Gorge will present their business ideas to the crowd. At the end of the night, everyone attending the dinner votes for their favorite presenter/business idea. The winner of the vote receives the remaining ticket money.

At the last Gorge Soup for Kids, the winner received more than \$1,700, with two other student groups winning as well. Not only do the student presenters get the opportunity to re-

ceive funding, they also have a great chance to generate community support and feedback for their business idea.

"The goal of Gorge Soup is to support new ideas, businesses, projects or initiatives that are entrepreneurial or community-oriented by nature," O'Shea said.

## DETAILS

**WHO:** Kids 18 and under, with adults

**WHEN:** Feb. 20, at 6 p.m.

**WHERE:** Springhouse Cellar Winery

**COST:** \$25 per person. Tickets are available at: <http://bit.ly/19aUmCT>.

"The main point of the event is to learn about and support people trying to make our community a better place through a new business or project."

For the Gorge Soup for Kids, any student from the Gorge can apply who meets the following criteria:

- Must be starting a new business or community initiative
  - Must be created and implemented by K-12 student
  - Must have an adult sponsor
- Each business must have income and expenses, but does

not have to make a profit. Community initiatives are not required to have income, but should list any other sources of support.

• Must take place in the Gorge  
Once applications are received, proposals will be reviewed, and up to five applicants will be invited to present at Gorge Soup. The goal of the review will be to ensure a wide variety of projects. If you are invited to present, guidelines for the presentation will be provided prior to the Gorge Soup dinner.

Unlike the traditional Gorge Soup where one winner takes all the funds for the evenings, at Gorge Soup for Kids, the goal is to have tiered funding that allows for several student businesses to receive funding for their new ventures.

Businesses or families who sponsor the event will have the option of having their logo or family name featured on a slideshow before the event and on the back of the evening's agenda. For more information about sponsorships, email [gorgesoup@gmail.com](mailto:gorgesoup@gmail.com).

Gorge Soup is based on Sunday Soup ([sundaysoup.org](http://sundaysoup.org)), a national movement of dinners that support community efforts through micro-philanthropy.

By RAELENN RICARTE

THE DALLES — A subcommittee of The Dalles Planning Commission is recommending two changes to city policy that could make it less expensive for some property owners to develop lots.

"In a lot of cases, the standards have to come down for anything to be built — if it doesn't pencil out, it doesn't get built," said Loyal Quackenbush, a member of the Standards Subcommittee.

He is also a landowner who has spent the last seven years disputing the \$150,000 price tag attached by the city to creation of a second lot on his east side property.

Quackenbush volunteered to serve on the work group that formed a couple of months ago to find ways to end a long-running dispute over development costs. The subcommittee was tasked with finding solutions to the challenge of upgrading infrastructure to meet growth needs. A Finance Subcommittee was also formed to explore options of covering expenses for that work.

The Standards group decided at a Jan. 9 meeting to make these recommendations to the planning commission:

- Elimination of waivers of remonstrance that prohibit a new property owner from protesting formation of a Local Improvement District to assess street frontage for infrastructure upgrades. The agreement is obtained from the original developer in lieu of requiring that improvements be undertaken. By signing the document, the owner agrees not to protest formation of an LID to cover the cost of that work in the future.
- Creating a more flexible street improvement plan so that curbs, sidewalks and storm drains are not required on more rural lots at the edge of town and along less developed streets. The current policy sets uniform standards for upgrades

no matter where the roadway is located.

The planning commission is expected to review these recommendations at 6 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 6, at City Hall, 313 Court Street. If approved, the proposals will be forwarded to the city council for a final decision.

The enactment of House Bill 3479 in July 2013 ended the city's ability to require waivers from landowners seeking a minor partition. However, officials have yet to decide how to deal with agreements already on record or required for other types of development.

The problem with waivers, said subcommittee members last week, is that infrastructure improvements might not take place for decades, by which time the cost is much higher. And a new property owner is then bound by the terms of the document that he or she did not sign.

In October, the city council eliminated the waiver of an East Ninth Street couple after they appealed the \$60,000 to \$80,000 cost for upgrades attached to their property.

Sean and Kindra Manning told officials that two buyers had walked away from a purchase of their home because of that potential expense. The first waiver had been signed in 1994 by a previous owner when the land was partitioned into two lots. The second in 1996 when another home was built on the land.

"I never signed either of those agreements," said Kindra. "The costs that are being quoted to prospective buyers by the city are approximately 40 percent of the value of our home."

Nolan Young, city manager, suggested last summer that deferred development agreements replace the waivers. He said these agreements would obligate landowners to pay for street improvements at the time construction began, which created financial certainty for the

city.

Members of the subcommittee said Jan. 9 that these agreements basically work the same as waivers, which they opposed.

The city has not been able to get a residential LID in place without waivers for more than 16 years. These proposals, such as the assessment for upgrading Thompson Street in 2012, have been met with strong citizen opposition due to the expense.

The city council decided to have the standards work group research options after HB 3479 was signed into law by Gov. John Kitzhaber. The legislation to eliminate fees for minor partitions was sought by Quackenbush and other east side landowners who opposed the high cost attached to development standards.

These property holders objected to the requirement that they prepay \$50,000 to more than \$150,000 for street improvements when they created a new lot.

Randy Hager is one of the landowners who sought help from Rep. John Huffman, R-The Dalles, the sponsor of HB 3479. He is among those still looking at an expensive bill — \$80,000 in his case — for a partition. He lives in the urban growth area that will one day be annexed and city staffers have interpreted the new law to be applicable only to residents in town.

Dave Hunnicutt, president of Oregonians in Action, a private property rights advocacy group, wrote HB 3479 and said it was intended to apply to all lands managed by the city. He said while properties in the urban growth area are under county jurisdiction, the city is the entity in charge of overseeing development.

He said if the city and county did not eliminate the partition fee on outlying lots to comply with HB 3479, he would ask the legislature to intervene in the upcoming session, or his organization would take legal action.



Chef Ben Stenn serves soup at the original Gorge Kids Soup, as supporters await refills.

PHOTO BY KIRBY NEUMANN-REA



# COR Cellars pegged as winery of 2013 by Seattle publication

By AMBER MARRA

LYLE — Luke Bradford has poured his heart into the making of wine.

Since 2003, Bradford has operated COR Cellars and in 2005 opened his tasting room and small vineyard in the vicinity of the other wineries situated in the countryside of Lyle.

With a focus on wines with lower alcohol content that are softer on the palate, Bradford hoped to serve up a product that lives up to the phrase from which his vineyard gets its name: *vinum bonum laetificat cor humanum*, or “good wine pleases the human heart.”

“It’s more of an old-school style of wine with higher acidity and lower alcohol that’s meant to be paired with food, rather than dominate food and overwhelm your palate,” Bradford said.

Now his approach has paid off. Stan Reitan, the wine critic behind The Seattle Post-Intelligencer’s Blue Collar Wine Guy blog, recently named COR Cellars Washington winery of the year for 2013.

Bradford, who has sold wine to Reitan in the past, was pleased that the wine that first got his attention was the 2009 Malbec, which is grown at Hogback Ridge Vineyard in The Dalles. The connection to that vineyard is strong for Bradford, who met Richard Lynch, who owns Hogback Ridge, when he was a UPS driver and delivered to COR in the early days.

“Out of all of our production, only about 30 percent comes from grapes grown in the Gorge, but it was important to me and certainly important to Richard that the one wine he focused on was from here and that he was a real proponent of the Gorge in



Luke Bradford, owner of COR Cellars, stands with some of the grapes planted at his vineyard in Lyle. COR was recently named Winery of the Year for 2013 by Stan Reitan, a wine critic for The Seattle Post Intelligencer. Bradford, who gets his grapes from across Washington and Oregon, said it was the 209 Malbec grown in The Dalles that originally caught Reitan’s eye.

PHOTO BY AMBER MARRA

general,” Bradford said.

The path to grow and make wine was not always a clear one for Bradford, but the urge to be outside and avoid being locked to a desk was always strong. After growing up in Manhattan and spending time on his family’s dairy farm in Pennsylvania as a kid, he knew he wanted to end up doing something that kept both his mind and body outdoors and occupied.

After studying political science and sustainable architecture at Evergreen State College in Olympia, Bradford spent some time in Italy with his

mother’s cousin, who coincidentally worked at Tenuta di Trinoro, a vineyard in southern Tuscany. He would end up spending eight months there helping out with the harvest and returning after his next semester in college for another six months for similar work.

When he got back, he switched to a program that allowed him to take as many business and chemistry classes as possible.

“Like any college kid I had a lot of enthusiasm and I wasn’t really sure what I was going to be up to, but it just kind of

clicked. This was fun work, it was hard work, and I enjoyed being outside and working with my hands. I could never be a desk-job kind of person, so it was a great way to get into a career that kept me outside,” Bradford said.

After graduating from Evergreen, he began applying to wineries all over Washington. As an avid kayaker, Bradford knew about the Columbia River Gorge and got a job at Wind River Cellars in Husum and later at Syncline Winery in Lyle.

He was able to learn more

along the way and was eventually able to branch off and launch COR Cellars in 2003. COR now buys fruit from Jewett Creek Vineyard in White Salmon up to Elephant Mountain Vineyard in the Yakima Valley. Grapes also come from Alder Ridge Vineyard, McKinley Springs, Celilo Vineyard, Hogback Ridge, and Underwood Mountain Vineyards.

Bradford finds his white wines to be the most interesting, but the 2009 Malbec that got COR its recent attention follows along with the philosophy

of lower-alcohol, higher-acidity wines.

“In general what we’re trying to do that would set us apart is trying to make wines that are a little lower alcohol and lighter bodied,” Bradford said. “Instead of trying to pick the ripest, densest, richest fruit we can, we’re trying to pick it a little earlier.”

“Most Malbecs tend to be almost jammy, very ripe, and this one from a slightly colder site still has all the fruit, but also has those nice, peppery, herbal characters that make it a little bit different,” he said.

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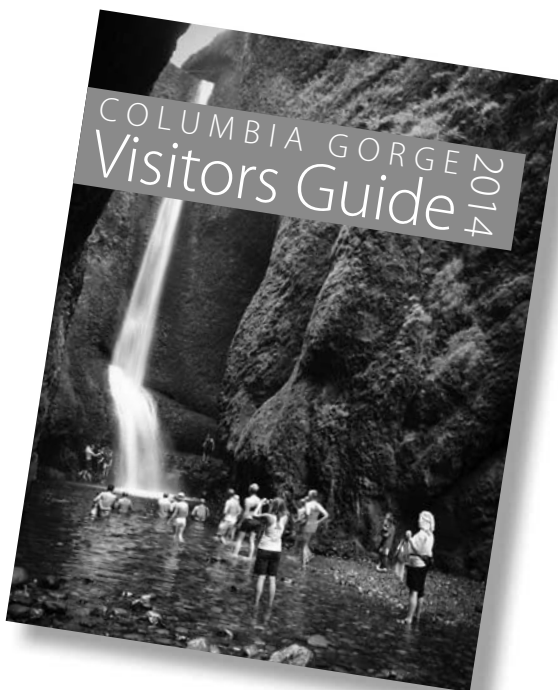
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Matt Byrne at his desk at Columbia Gorge Community College, where he tracks student numbers for the college district, which takes in Wasco and Hood River counties.

PHOTO BY RAELENN RICARTE

## World traveler settles into CGCC numbers

**By RAELENN RICARTE**

**THE DALLES** — Matthew Byrne set off to see the world and found, after spending time in Australia, South America and several places in between, that his heart was pulled back to the Gorge where he had been raised.

"Traveling actually helped me see what an incredible place this is," he said.

The 25-year-old native of Parkdale and graduate of Hood River Valley High School has settled into the role of institutional researcher for Columbia Gorge Community College. He has been happily at work since August studying student demographics and compiling reports and surveys.

"What I do is all across the board," he said. "This is only the third year the college has had an institutional researcher so we're still kind of defining the position."

He holds a degree in international public health and once worked as an AmeriCorps volunteer with plans to spend his career preventing diseases and prolonging life. However, Byrne has found his new position a good fit because of the variety and mental challenge it offers.

He fulfills faculty requests for information about student performance and studies trends and incoming data to make sure the college is on track with its core values and objectives. These are incorporated into the mission statement "Building Dreams, Transforming Lives" and also include strengthening community partnerships.

In early December, Byrne delivered his first student profile to the college's board of educators. He told them that there had been a 13.8 percent decrease in full-time students during the 2012-13 academic year, dropping the total number of students to 1,076. When part-time students are added in, there are a 4,657 individuals attending classes in Hood River and The Dalles.

Board members said the downturn in enrollment is predictable with an upswing in the state and national economy. When people lose jobs or are struggling financially, they often decide to upgrade skills in another field, which accounted for higher numbers after the recession hit in 2008.

Even though full-time enrollment fell below the 3 percent annual growth target at

the college in, 2012-13, Byrne said it was the second highest year ever for the award of degrees (187) and certificates (88).

The college awarded \$5 million in financial aid to 869 students, including 449 who were part-time. The average aid package was \$6,634 per person.

Byrne said the ages of full-time students are growing younger and now stand at an average of 26.3, compared with 36.1 when part-timers are added in.

Seventy-four percent of students at the college live in either Wasco or Hood River counties, 18 percent come from Washington state and the remaining 8 percent from other parts of Oregon.

The student body during 2012-13 was representative of the region in ethnic composition with a large Caucasian majority at 76.7 percent, and a significant Hispanic minority at 20.2 percent.

Females make up the largest portion of the student population at 61 percent, compared with 39 percent being male.

In addition to processing existing data, Byrne also con-

ducts surveys and makes sure the college fulfills its mandatory reporting requirements to state and federal authorities in order to maintain independent accreditation.

In July, the college achieved its seven-year goal to achieve autonomy and no longer has to operate under the umbrella of Portland Community College. That has gained the college more flexibility to develop instructional programs and provide services to students.

The distinction brings with it the requirement for continual evaluation and improvement. Byrne said he will be part of the process to continually measure how the institution is performing.

"If I find that a group of students is having trouble, then I will work with faculty members and administrators to come up with solutions and best practices," he said.

On the personal side, Byrne is engaged to Michelle Baragona, whom he met at the British Pub in Hood River during trivia night. They enjoy outdoor sports and recreational activities, such as hiking, that are widely available in the Gorge.



# Tax limits increasingly hurt cities' budgets

By **RAELYNN RICARTE**

**THE DALLES** — The Dalles joins a majority of cities in the state that have deferred maintenance of streets due to budget constraints, according to a recent report issued by the League of Oregon Cities.

The annual "State of the Cities" report outlines that the largest challenge facing the 180 cities that participated in a survey is a limitation on property tax collections.

Measure 5, a constitutional amendment, and Measure 50, a citizen initiative, restrict the level that taxes can be raised each year and set a cap for how much can be taken from a property owner.

City property tax collections lost to these caps have increased by 335 percent between fiscal year 2008-09 and 2012-13, according to the 2014 report.

Five years of financial data was provided by The Dalles and another 179 of the state's 242 cities for the latest analysis.

Nolan Young, city manager for The Dalles, said compression of taxes increases by about \$20,000 each year at the local government level, which has become a source of concern.

Compression occurs under Measure 5, enacted in 1990, when a property's tax bill exceeds the legal limit of \$5 per \$1,000 of a property's real market value for education (not including bonds) or \$10 per \$1,000 for general government. Once that happens, the amount collected is reduced uniformly among taxing agencies. Temporary levies are compressed before taxes that fund permanent districts.

Young said the latest report reflects that many cities are worse off than The Dalles because they are not only faced with roadwork funding challenges. Thirty-eight percent are identified as also struggling to cover the cost of sewer and water system upgrades. And 37

percent have deferred maintenance on their fleets, building and other internal municipal needs.

Cities within Wasco County receive 9 percent of the property tax collected, compared to the statewide average of 20 percent. That differential is due, in part, to the creation of separate taxing districts to fund fire, park and library services.

Property taxes in The Dalles comprise 42 percent of the \$6.5 million general fund, with operating transfers from other funds to cover department services providing another 17.6 percent slice of the pie.

Measure 50 became law in 1997 and froze real market values at the assessed rate of 1995. Local governments are allowed only a 3 percent increase each year unless major development takes place. If that occurs, an agency can temporarily exceed the permanent rate limit to take care of service needs, but only for a period of five years for operations or 10 years for capital projects.

Young said property taxes have remained steady in the past few years but there has been a slight decrease in the amount of franchise fees the city has collected, which is a trend that bears watching. These fees collected from utility and cable companies contribute 15.8 percent to the general fund and hotel taxes another 10.6 percent.

Young said the city is considering a gas tax proposal to raise more money for repair and maintenance of about 88 miles of streets. About 60 percent of these roadways are dilapidated enough to need a more extensive level of work.

One way to come up with another \$450,000 per year for projects is to double the current 3 percent local gas tax, although Young said nothing has been decided upon at this point.

He said the city council is considering whether to partner

with the county on formation of a road taxing district to generate revenue for roadwork. An increase in vehicle registration fees is also on the table for consideration.

Young said reviewing the league's annual report is enlightening because it highlights more severe problems that other cities are grappling with.

For example, many municipalities are groaning under the weight of Public Employee Retirement System rates.

Young said The Dalles does not participate in this program and has been spared the 73 percent hike in rates from 2009-11 to 2013-15.

He said The Dalles has also fared better than cities with their own building departments, which have experienced a drastic decline in operating revenue since the Great Recession began in 2008. The Mid-Columbia Council of Governments handles permits for residents in town.

"We've stayed fairly even during the recession even though our franchise fees and transient room taxes have been a little flat," said Young. "We feel we have a pretty good handle on our budget."

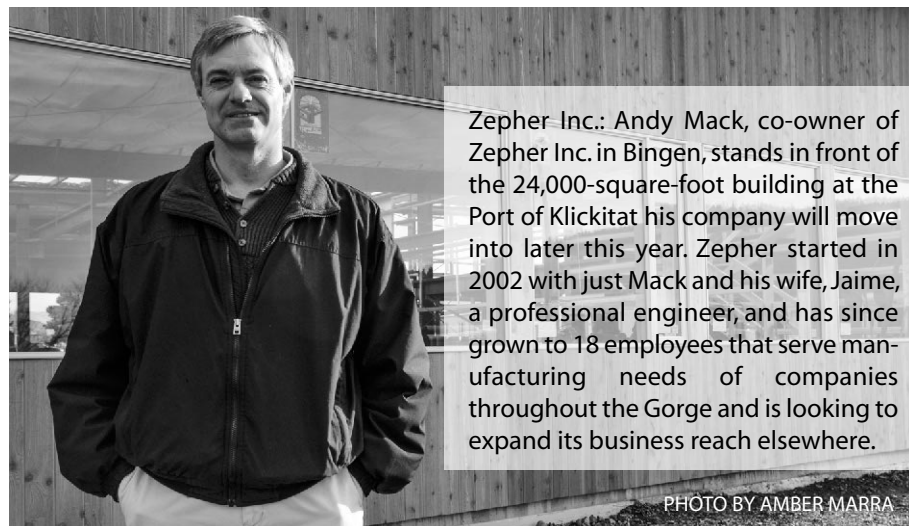
The league's report says that Oregon's housing market is improving in more populated areas and construction has started to pick up.

Young said there has been a slight increase in residential growth — about a dozen homes were built in town the last year — but not enough to call it an uptick.

"We are about the same," he said.

He said having revenue begin to decrease in some areas while operating expenses continue to go up is going to necessitate some budget adjustments in the upcoming year.

"We're still good but we're keeping an eye open for opportunities to tighten our belt if we need to," said Young.



Zepher Inc.: Andy Mack, co-owner of Zepher Inc. in Bingen, stands in front of the 24,000-square-foot building at the Port of Klickitat his company will move into later this year. Zepher started in 2002 with just Mack and his wife, Jaime, a professional engineer, and has since grown to 18 employees that serve manufacturing needs of companies throughout the Gorge and is looking to expand its business reach elsewhere.

PHOTO BY AMBER MARRA

## Changes blowing in for Bingen's Zepher Inc.

By **AMBER MARRA**

**BINGEN** — Like some other technology companies in the Gorge, Zepher Inc. is looking to expand its horizons.

Andy Mack and his wife, Jaime, started Zepher in 2002 as a resource for engineering consulting, but these days the company employs 18 people as its capabilities have grown over the years.

Of course, with that growth comes the need for more space. Zepher is currently housed in two buildings coming to 10,000 square feet of warehouse and office space, but since the company has matured into a full-on contract manufacturer the time has come to move on to a bigger, better space.

"The space right now is an office and shop facility and we're pretty cramped. We've definitely gotten by as best we could with the space we have," Mack said.

Zepher is currently in the process of building a new 24,000-square-foot workshop and office at the Port of Klickitat in Bingen with the same hope of many technology companies throughout the Gorge: to make the move from defense contracts into those

more commercial in nature.

The current location is the second place Zepher has called home. The company started taking off in the two-garage carwash building off of Main Street in White Salmon four years ago and then moved on to the two buildings it currently occupies in Bingen; that is, until the new building is finished, which is on schedule to happen in July or earlier.

"In order to keep up with demand for the type of work we're doing now and the size of the equipment we're working with we needed a larger facility that's more appropriately designed to accommodate the equipment we're manufacturing. There's just not much available as far as buildings in the area for manufacturing; everything is either too small or too big or not tailored to the type of work we need to do," Mack said.

Like other local companies, Zepher got its start in assembly consulting with Insitu and continues to work with the aerospace company's launch and retrieval systems, but also focuses on trailer-based ground support equipment.

"We've touched it, but we

don't do all of the actual launcher assembly work; some of that is done at another company; but we do integrate all of it together on the trailers," Mack said.

Now Zepher operates as a contract manufacturer focusing on project management, mechanical assembly, equipment testing, and procurement. But just because Zepher is looking to diversify doesn't mean there isn't still interest in working in the aerospace industry. Mack said his company recently obtained a small contract with another large aerospace outfit from outside of the Gorge.

Sticking around the Gorge and settling into the new workspace is the long-term goal, however.

"We'd certainly like to stay here; that's our goal," Mack said. "We'll continue to grow the company so it's sustainable and well diversified."

"While we do primarily work in aerospace and defense right now we're looking for commercial assembly work, as well," he said. "We're very encouraged with the way things are going and the way it looks for the near future."



# Commission approves permit for new building

By NEITA CECIL

THE DALLES — A new \$3.2 million 3,700-square-foot transit center will be built starting this summer on West Seventh Street, behind The Home Depot in The Dalles. Seventh would have to be extended to Chenowith Loop Road, and also widened.

The transit center, operated by Mid-Columbia Council of Governments, should open by summer 2015. It will go on land formerly occupied by a bowling alley that burned down in 1987.

The purpose of the center is to put the Council of Governments' eight-bus fleet under protection, both from the elements and mischief.

Now, the fleet sits in the open, unfenced, behind the Oregon State Police field office.

On Jan. 16, The Dalles Planning Commission unanimously approved the Council of Governments' request for a permit to build the center.

The new transit center will house Columbia Area Transit and LINK, and will also be where Greyhound buses stop to load and unload passengers.

The initial plans called for picking up and dropping off passengers on Chenowith Loop, in an 8-foot-wide pull-out area designed to accommodate the bus.

But commissioners questioned whether that might lead to a tight squeeze if the commercial bus were in the pull-out and two school buses happened to be heading simultaneously in either direction on Chenowith.

Rather than reconfigure that, the proposal was made to move the drop-off site to Seventh. Buses would turn south on Chenowith off of West Sixth Street, east on Seventh to load and unload, and then head north on Hostetler to leave the area.

The city, Council of Governments, its architect, and the school district will meet to see if moving the drop-off site to Sev-

enth is feasible, given the turning radius needed for the buses.

One neighbor, Elizabeth Helseth, wrote in objection to the proposal, saying traffic was already heavy on Chenowith and school children walking and riding bikes "need some space and non-polluted air to breathe."

Dan Schwanz, transportation director for the Council of Governments, said the new transit center would not only allow buses be covered and maintained — since an area for light maintenance is planned — but it will also put the currently spread out transportation services of the Council of Governments in one location.

Longstanding city plans to build a parking structure next to the current Greyhound bus drop-off — on First Street downtown — are also a factor.

"We decided it was time for us to move because we ultimately wouldn't be able to do business there," Schwanz said of the First Street location.

Schwanz said the Council of Governments is assuming growth in its bus services as the population ages. The new facility will have room to house 18 buses, although the fleet has eight buses now, and will also have room for a park-and-ride lot.

The Council of Governments provides services to the whole community, from seniors who no longer drive, to school kids. "We provide quite a bit of service to school kids whose parents don't want their kids to walk as far as the school requests them to," Schwanz said.

The CAT bus service provides fixed-route service to Hood River and Portland and the LINK service provides dial-a-ride service. The Council of Governments also coordinates medical transportation.

John Nelson, chair of the city's traffic safety committee,

said the new transit center would support alternative transportation other than autos and would also provide bike lanes on both sides of Seventh Street.

Seventh Street will be pushed through from Hostetler to Chenowith regardless of where the bus drop-off is located.

The siting of the transit center there will trigger a previous agreement signed by Home Depot to make improvements to Seventh Street if development there occurred.

John Arens, the executive director of the Council of Governments, said the agency had been looking for a location for the transit center for four or five years, and had been working on purchasing the property on Chenowith and Seventh for 18 months.

Right now, the Council of Governments doesn't have an affiliation with Greyhound. It used to be a ticket agent, but stopped that service about three years ago because commissions from Greyhound dropped so much, Arens said.

Since then, no local agent has existed, and the trend is for people to buy tickets online.

The Council of Governments will be able to build at least the bus shelter, an administrative building and a parking area with the current \$3.2 million federal grant. Hopes are to at least do part of Phase Two in this construction cycle, which includes a shelter for passengers and a two-bay light maintenance shop.

Phase Three would be additional shelter for buses. Phase Four is a larger park-and-ride lot.

The administrative office will house a call center with four people and a dispatcher and operations manager for LINK, plus an office for Schwanz, who splits his time between The Dalles and Hood River.

## BUSINESS BRIEFS

### HRD vodka best-seller in Oregon

A vodka produced by Hood River Distillers was the best-seller by volume for the past year in Oregon.

The Oregon Liquor Control Commission reports HRD Vodka sold nearly 249,000 gallons. Number 2 on the list is Fleischmann's Royal Vodka with about 176,000 gallons.

The list of top distilled spirits sold in the state was released Friday, covering the period from December 2012 through November 2013.

The commission says spirits produced by Oregon distillers made up 16 percent of the total volume. The state has 55 local distillers.

Although HRD Vodka was number 1 by volume it was only number 6 in dollar sales. That top spot went to Jack Daniel's Old No. 7 at \$13.7 million. HRD Vodka was sixth on the dollar sales list at \$9.1 million.

### Tortilleria LaCascada opens on 12th

Enrique Ortega and partners opened Tortilleria La Cascada at 1021 12th St. in Hood

River on Dec. 30.

The new store, open 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. seven days a week, makes fresh flour and corn organic tortillas in the Nixtamal style, a process of grinding based on the Aztec method of grinding the corn or grain in volcanic stones.

Ortega and his crew have imported specialized equipment from Mexico that employs unique limestone grinding stones. Ingredients list: corn, water, flour "and a trace of lime."

Ortega and his wife, Maria, also own Gorge Taxi Service.

### Pita Pit restaurant opens on the Heights

National pita sandwich chain Pita Pit opened its new location at 1769 12th St. on the Heights in the Hood River Shopping Center Jan. 5.

Cheramy Rovianek, who owns the business along with her husband, Doug, says the eatery specializes in "Lebanese style pitas" that use "fresh and healthy ingredients," but breakfast pitas are also served.

The business began accepting employment applications

back in late November 2013 and now employs approximately 20 people.

Pita Pit is open Sunday through Thursday, 9 a.m. to 9 p.m.; Friday and Saturday until 10 p.m. Credit cards are accepted. Call 541-436-0600.

### Curves offers Jillian Michaels workouts

Curves of Hood River has announced it is now offering Curves Workouts with Jillian Michaels, total body workouts that feature the Curves Circuit strength training machines in conjunction with functional bodyweight-based exercises. They are designed for women at every fitness level and include simple modifications for each movement.

Metabolic conditioning exercises will be done in between each strength machine within the Curves Circuit, all within a 30-minute class The Curves Workouts with Jillian Michaels will be showcased on a large-screen TV, set to upbeat music.

Contact Curves of Hood River at 541-386-6600 or curves@gorge.net or visit the club at 1108 12th St., Ste. B.

## Ranchers help clothe Olympians

By KATHY URSPRUNG

SHANIKO — Part of the circle: Jeannie and Dan Carver may still be home on Imperial Ranch when the winter Olympic games start in Sochi next month, but a part of them and their ranch will be making history in Russia as their wool dresses the athletes in their uniform sweaters and mittens.

A preview of that event is set for this Thursday morning, Jan. 23, on NBC's "Today Show," where David Lauren and Team USA athletes will unveil the opening ceremony sweaters, made with Imperial's Erin Yarn. This story of fiber to final product is an all-American one.

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— SHAUN WHITE

"We have worked incredibly hard as a company to go across America to find the best partners to help us produce the Olympic uniforms at the highest quality for the best athletes in the world," said David Lauren, Ralph Lauren Corporation's executive vice president of advertising, marketing and

corporate communications.

More than 40 vendors, including Imperial Ranch, were involved in creating the athletes' ensembles, which include a navy peacoat with a red stripe, a classic ski sweater with a reindeer motif and a hand-sewn American flag, and a tasseled chunky-knit hat.



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# Pistil: Room to work and 'not just a hat company anymore'

By KIRBY NEUMANN-REA

HOOD RIVER — If anyone needed a bigger place to hang its hat, it was the folks at Pistil.

The Hood River hat and garment distributor marked its 10th year in October by consolidating in a larger and more efficient space on Columbia Street in downtown Hood River.

A happy crew got happier — and not just for the new location, next to Full Sail Brewery.

"We needed more space. Even with our two buildings we were maxed," said Pete Hixson, who co-owns the company with Tood Douglass and Forrest Jones. The company started in Hixson's basement on Montello, and a short time later moved to a cramped office/warehouse space on 11th Street, and rented space on Tucker Road was added later.

"We were ready; we were really on top of each other, and a lot of our materials were on top of us," Douglass said. "We were getting inefficient." She pointed to a stack of colorful knit hats: "where someone has a file drawer, this is my 'stack of paper' — when a correction or changes comes in, I get another stack."

In the old place, that "stack of paper" was confusingly close to other stacks, and the ever-present concern was keeping inventory organized so that clients received the full and proper order.

Now, design and ordering spaces are separate from stor-

age and shipping, but despite the expanded space, by being in one place everyone knows what goes into the whole process and everyone feels closer to it, as Hixson explains it.

Pistil designs hats, gloves, scarves, headbands and other recreational gear, and in its beginnings specialized in winter hats but has expanded to all four seasons and numerous products for men, women and children. Production is done in Italy, Peru, India and Asia.

The product comes to Hood River, where Pistil packages and ships to clients all over North America, as well as to Korea and Japan. Its products are also available at retailers in Hood River.

"We've been very fortunate; we've always grown but the number of people we service and accounts we have has grown exponentially," Hixson said. Pistil now has about 1,400 retail accounts.

With the move, instead of being elbow-to-elbow people and product in the same space, the buckets and bins holding past product are kept in a separate room downstairs.

"Each bin holds our life of this product from beginning to end," Douglass said. The previous product lines have to be kept at ready so that new orders can be checked to make sure the product that comes in is the current edition and not an earlier or obsolete version.

Douglass is in charge of design and product development; Hixson handles daily operations; Jones manages marketing and brand management.

"I'd like to say we're just getting better at what we do, we've been doing it so long," Hixson said. "Definitely we are not just a hat company anymore. We have the range of accessories, we do them all seasons, and I like to consider us as an actual brand, with a brand identity in our market place."

"No one knew anything of what Pistil was, so we just hung our hat on 'This is a cute product, you ought to check it out,' and now we're recognized as



PISTIL staff takes a break in expanded work space. From left are: Heather Beamer, Pete Hixson, Stephanie Hart; Julie Estcourt, Forrest Jones, Cass Estes and Tood Douglass.

PHOTOS BY KIRBY NEUMANN-REA

the name and not just as the product; but we're definitely product-driven, and most of our energy and most of dollars go into product development and brand support," Hixson said.

With orders growing, "The process is kind of the same; just a lot of more of it. In our 10 years, the people we hire are still here. We're not changing over people, just adding in around them, which is part of our success."

"First we added in the product development side, and the employees we added there in four or five years have not left. That's our strength: the people. They're happy, the company is doing well and everyone feels a sense of ownership; and now we have these great new digs — it's kind of like a thank you for them because they've been working hard."

Hixson jokes, "left in my needs, we'd be in 15 different shortage spaces, the cheapest way possible, but this (new space) has been great, and our productivity has improved dramatically. Our products are moving quicker, more organized; it's easier for everyone and

as a work space, so much happier, rather than crammed around a bunch of boxes."

"We no longer have to think 'Make it work; it's only four months.' We were living in a sea of product, don't even know what you have because you get lost in it. It would be all around us, and you'd have an order and say, 'I gotta get that,' and then do a lot of digging."

The move to the expanded space came as Pistil faced its busiest time of the year, October and November.

In its 9,000 square feet is an office, design space, warehouse and shipping.

"Everything we produce and sell we receive in here, we repackage it by order and ship it out. We do five hats to 50,000; there's no order minimum. We did one today for three," Hixson said. He remembers the company's first order — to Kinnucann's, an Alabama clothing store.

"They are still an account; been with us 10 years," Hixson said. At the time, we thought, 'We're going to need some sales reps,' and we call this guy in the southeast and he said, 'I'd love to do it,' and a couple of days later,

our first order, and we're on."

Hixson and Douglass worked for another local hat manufacturer for seven years; which he said gave them "a leg up in the marketplace as far as knowledge," and Jones was a contractor with that company.

"As far as the nucleus of what makes up Pistil, you'd be hard-pressed to find as many people with this much experience in this niche," Hixson said.

Are there challenges that come with growth?

"Probably just living up to our own expectations and what we want as far as level of service we tell people we're going to commit to," Hixson said. "We still have very high standards for our product and customer service; that is a challenge because you have 1,400 people you're serving in a month, and the chance you get a phone call back from them goes up exponentially."

The new location, with everyone in the same building, in downtown Hood River, has been a huge plus for Pistil.

"We are far more visible down here, and that's a bonus, but the biggest asset besides

being more productive is everyone is happier, it's cleaner and everyone sees the process; it's not in some warehouse somewhere," Hixson said. "All those things are coming to life now, in the greater work space, the flow or product in and out," he said. "It's been surprising it took us this long. It's like when people have their hip replaced, they keep putting it off and then ask, 'Why didn't I do that two years ago?' That's kind of the way we feel right now."

The one business piece not found at Pistil is retail. Hixson, Douglass and Jones are not ruling it out, but they have enough on their hands with "getting the product out the door," Hixson said, and they want to avoid competing with the local retailers who sell their product.

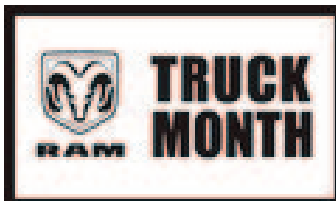
But Pistil hats and gloves can be found in plenty of other pools outside of the retail stream.

Douglass explained that the company does a "cleanout once a year;" of outdated product. Examples from each season are kept while still part of the catalog, or for historical reference.



Designer Tood Douglass sits with her "stack of papers."





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