

Columbia River
Gorge
Business
Review

September 2017

Covering Gorge Business

Volume 10, No. 9



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FISH garden serves four local food banks Page 11

Columbia River Gorge Business Review

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FISH Garden Coordinator Susan Randolph conducts a tour at the Food Bank garden, which serves four local food banks. See story, page 11.



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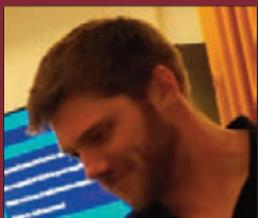
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JESSE BURKHARDT



Wheatland Insurance has opened a branch office in The Dalles. Left to right are John Anderson, insurance producer; Tabitha Batten, personal lines account manager; and Shanna Westerman, commercial account manager. Sheri Tuttle, the receptionist at Wheatland's office in The Dalles, is not pictured.

Wheatland takes root in TD

By **JESSE BURKHARDT**

THE DALLES — The managers of Pendleton-based Wheatland Insurance Center long ago realized that setting up a branch office in The Dalles made good sense, because Wheatland focuses on providing farm and crop insurance for rural, agricultural communities. And the expanding company made its move early this year.

"On Feb. 1, we came to town," said John Anderson, producer-agent for Wheatland and head

of the office in The Dalles, located at 312 Federal St. "The Dalles is an agricultural town, and agriculture is a staple of our business. We're excited to be here."

The Dalles is Wheatland's 11th location in northeastern Oregon, joining a list of agricultural communities that includes Condon, Elgin, Pendleton, Hermiston, Baker City, La Grande, Athena, Enterprise, Heppner, and Ione.

"Eastern Oregon is definitely

our area of interest. Small towns are important to us," Anderson said.

Anderson appears to be an ideal choice to represent Wheatland in The Dalles. He was born on a wheat ranch in Condon and is a member of a fourth-generation wheat farming family. His father, Kent Anderson, owns the farm, which encompasses 5,000 acres. The family grazes cattle on some of

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Wheels of Hope' campaign rolls out help again in 2017



Nominate Gorge families in need of transportation now during the 2017 Wheels of Hope campaign online at Gorgeradio.com.

HOOD RIVER — The radio stations of Bicoastal Media are teaming with Northshore Medical Group to launch their annual campaign to help a Columbia Gorge family in need. Wheels of Hope will provide a deserving family lacking transportation options a 2007 Honda Accord from Griffith Motors to help them meet their daily needs.

Community members can make nominations of friends and neighbors who are in need online at Gorgeradio.com.

A panel of judges made up of representatives from Bicoastal Media, Northshore Medical

Group, and representatives of agencies involved in helping families will select the family to receive the vehicle, which will be awarded in mid-October.

In addition, this year's recipient will be able to "Pay It Forward" as Bud Light will make a \$3,000 donation in the recipient's name to a deserving charity.

Watch for the Wheels of Hope vehicle to be on display at various local events throughout the summer in Hood River and Wasco counties.

Along with Bicoastal Media, Northshore Medical Group and Griffith Motors, Wheels of Hope is

also supported by Walmart, Bud Light, The Dalles Fruit Company, The Dalles Napa Auto Parts, A Kidz Dental Zone, NW Natural, Maupin Stoves & Spas, Oregon Equipment, Tacy's Place, Windermere Real Estate, Infinite Graphix, Columbia Veterinary Hospital, and Crestline Construction.

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FILL THE BOOT

HOOD RIVER — Engineer Jason Wilkins of Hood River Fire and EMS accepts a donation from a motorist during the Aug. 5 “Fill the Boot” campaign at 13th and Cascade streets. As members of the department do every year, six Hood River fire personnel took turns standing next to, or in traffic, brandishing boots all for a good cause: to raise money for the Muscular Dystrophy Association. Lieut. Manuel Irusta said the effort was a success, with \$5,500 raised in the eight-hour period.

WHEATLAND

Continued from page 2

the property as well.

“I grew up working on the wheat farm, then left for college,” Anderson said. “I still help out on the ranch, of course.”

He attended Southern Oregon University in Ashland, and later studied at La Universidad Nacional de Rosario in Argentina. After that, he went to Costa Rica to teach English.

“But the old story of student debt knocking on the door brings you back around,” he said. “My mom, Lori Anderson, worked for Hudson Insurance in The Dalles, and she thought insurance was something I should get into.”

The insurance business felt like a good fit to Anderson, who believes his experience on the farm is valuable in his role with Wheatland.

“Growing up on a wheat farm

gives you a good perspective on how to insure a farm and how to properly protect that business,” he said. “And you understand the pride people have in their farms.”

Although it is well known for its work insuring farmers and ranchers, Anderson pointed out the company offers many other types of insurance.

“We handle all lines,” he said. “Home and auto. Commercial. Farm and ranch. Life and

health.”

Wheatland, an independent agency, currently has four full-time staffers in its new office in The Dalles.

“As we grow, we’ll expand,” he said.

Anderson, who still lives in Condon, also oversees the Condon office. Now he will run the office in The Dalles as well, working in The Dalles three days a week and two in Condon.

“I take care of both; every-

thing is in between,” he said, adding that he has about an hour and a half commute between Condon and The Dalles.

Anderson said one of his main responsibilities is to meet with clients, so driving around the area is just part of the package.

“One of the most important things we do here is customer service,” Anderson said. “There is a lot of travel to rural communities. It keeps it interesting.

Every day is a new day.”

Anderson said the response to Wheatland’s arrival in the community has been “great,” and the company plans to work to keep it that way.

“We’re big in participating in community events, and we want to give back to The Dalles,” Anderson explained. “It’s important to what we do.”

The office in The Dalles is open Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

PHOTO BY
JESSE BURKHARDT



Noah Blakely plans to change the name of the Riverenza Espresso Bar & Cafe to "The Riv."

Riverenza set to become 'The Riv'

By **JESSE BURKHARDT**

THE DALLES — Some alterations are planned for the Riverenza Espresso Bar & Café, located at 401 E. 10th St. in a century-old stone building, an impressive structure that once housed the Church of Christ.

The Riverenza, which first opened as a coffee shop in November 2007, is now gearing up for new ownership and a new direction.

"We are in a transition phase," said Noah Blakely, who is in the process of purchasing the business with his wife and co-owner, Lauren. "We're waiting on a loan application."

It's somewhat odd to find a trendy café in what looks and feels like a church, but that just seems to be part of the

charm of the place, which includes an outdoor courtyard with seating underneath a tall and leafy horse chestnut tree. Inside, light pours through vintage stained glass, adding to the ambience and offering a hint of the building's religious origins.

If all goes as expected, the tweaks Blakely plans extend even to the name of the coffee house, which he intends to switch to "The Riv" once the transition in ownership is complete.

Blakely, who has managed the Riverenza for the past four months under the current owner, Molly Ott, said he wants to switch the name because it fits more with the image he hopes to create.

"We went to 'The Riv' because it's an indicator of this place, an indicator of The Dalles and the river," he explained. "Part of the name kind of blends with what Riverenza was and what we want it to be, which is a more earthy and organic vibe."

Despite the name change, Noah and Lauren intend to keep the café largely as it is now, focusing primarily on breakfasts such as scrambled eggs on a muffin or grilled French bread, and lunch that features a variety of paninis.

"Molly did a great job, we're just adding to it," Blakely said. "We'll keep the same basic menu, but add our way of

See *THE 'RIV'*, page 6

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L to R: Pat Tanner, Holly Webster, Dania Guadarrama, Alondra Gomez, Desi Zeller, Katie Leininger & Liz Medrano. Not pictured: Sonia Castillo & Sue Fogle.

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THE 'RIV'

Continued from page 5

preparing breakfasts. We want to keep a lot of paninis and revise our salads, make more house-made goods, and we want as much of the menu as locally-sourced and made in-house as possible."

For example, The Riv is selling biscuits from Lauren's grandmother's recipe, and they are making scones in-house. The owners also hope to start making bagels on site.

In addition, as is the case with Riverenza, The Riv will

offer beer and wine, dessert and pastries, smoothies, and a selection of Stumptown coffees.

Blakely said Stumptown is a Portland company with a progressive business model.

"I love their business ethics, and what they do as a company," Blakely explained. "Our motto is, 'Business means justice.'"

To get the full impact of the quality The Riv is striving for, Blakely recommended not settling for solely the house coffee, but trying an espresso drink or cold brew, which he

said are house specialties.

"The hope is to have excellent coffee, excellent food, and excellent service," Blakely said. "Our hope is to get the sense we're matching the quality of the building and the artisan work that went into it with our artisan work with food."

One intriguing innovation is the introduction of live music on a monthly basis. Ben Blakely, Noah's brother, has begun hosting "Friday Nights with Ben" on the final Friday of every month from 7-9:30 p.m.

Ben, who plays guitar, bass

guitar and piano, said the music would be on the "mel-lower end, an acoustic mix of things."

"I get to showcase local musicians," Ben explained. "It's semi-spontaneous. We'll work some things up and play together, put sets together, have fun and hang out restaurant-style and listen to live music."

Noah Blakely said owning a food business has been a goal of his for as long as he can remember.

"I've wanted to own a restaurant, especially a coffee shop, my whole life," he

pointed out.

Blakely, who attends Calvary Baptist Church and met his wife while performing mission work in San Francisco, said the irony of doing business in what was a church for several decades is not lost on him.

"Jesus always was a big part of my life," he said. "I've been praying for this building for six years. I would come in here every day to get coffee and a muffin and loved it."

Although the hours are subject to change, Blakely said that as of Sept. 1, he is planning for The Riv to be open

from 6 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday through Friday, from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. on Saturday, and from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. on Sunday.

While he waits for his loan application to be processed, Blakely said he is optimistic everything is coming together in a positive way.

"We've seen the response in our customer base. People love the items we've brought in and love what we've done," he said.

The Riv can be reached at 541-980-5001.

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Business notes: Hood River names Dustin Nilsen Planning Director



Dustin Nilsen

HOOD RIVER — After an extensive search, the City of Hood River has announced that its new planning director will be Dustin Nilsen, currently senior planner for Wasco County. Nilsen starts his new position in mid-September, which allows time to work with current Planning Director Cindy Walbridge prior to her retirement.

"It's a great honor to be offered this position and an opportunity that I accept with such enthusiasm," Nilsen said. "Hood River

faces a number of challenges, but is such a special place and positioned for success. It's truly a privilege to call the Gorge home, to represent the city, and work on behalf of the community."

Nilsen's selection was the result of a highly competitive process that included 20 applicants from Oregon, Washington and as far away as Wisconsin. Finalists were interviewed and evaluated by a panel of city management and community representatives based on the city's

criteria for an ideal candidate, according to City Manager Steve Wheeler.

"Dustin impressed us as a passionate, outstanding planner and the city looks forward to his contributions," said Wheeler. "His collaborative style, creativity and extensive knowledge of today's planning concepts brought him to the top of many favorable choices for this position. We predict he will be very engaged and approachable."

Nilsen has held the senior

planner position in Wasco County the past two years. He has 17 years of professional planning experience, including 10 years with the Village of Antioch, Ill. (population 14,274 in the Chicago Metropolitan Area), seven of which were as director of community development. He also has over three years as senior planner in Aurora, Colo.

Nilsen earned his Masters in urban and regional planning with a dual emphasis in land use and transportation from

the University of Iowa, and a Bachelor of Science degree in the environmental studies department from University of Iowa as well.

Currently a resident of Mosier, Nilsen's years in the Gorge have given him a working knowledge of the Oregon Statewide Planning Program, National Scenic Area Management Plan, and an understanding of Gorge communities.

Walbridge retires on Oct. 2 after more than 27 years with the City of Hood River.

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COLUMBIA CENTER for the ARTS

'Sketchbook Project' invites conversation

HOOD RIVER — With the new "Sketchbook Project," Columbia Center for the Arts is looking to a January 2018 exhibition.

The center has distributed about 40 fresh sketchbooks to artists all over the world, and more are available.

For a 2018 exhibition titled "Community Conversations," the art center is launching a new "Artist Sketchbook Library" — home to sketchbooks submitted by artists. The idea is the brainchild of Hood River

artist Robin Panzer.

Participating artists will fill their sketchbooks with their own art, musing, drawings, collages, etc. Artists may collaborate with another artist or artists, or fill a few pages and pass the book on to another artist. Completed sketchbooks must be returned to the Columbia Art Center by Dec. 1.

The books will become a permanent part of the CCA gallery sketchbook library that will be available to the public to look

through. The plan is for the library to continue, with more artists contributing books over the years. Visitors to the gallery will also be able to contribute to community sketchbooks.

Sketchbooks are available at the gallery, or email Executive Director Kerry Cobb at director@columbiaarts.org. Include your name, address, and email, and one will be mailed to you.

For more details, visit www.columbiaarts.org/?s=Sketchbooks.



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'Happiness Month' returns to Gorge

Happiness Month is coming to the Gorge again this October and businesses and organizations are invited to participate and to help spread the word.

Sponsored by the nonprofit community health center One Community Health, Gorge Happiness Month is 31 days focused on the three daily habits scientifically proven to make people happier: Gratitude, acts of kindness and moments of silence.

The goal is to inspire as many people as possible to make happy a habit. The initiative is based on studies showing that happier people are healthier, with lower rates of cardiovascular disease, longer lives, faster healing after injuries and better im-

munity. Happier people are also shown to be more productive at work. Companies and organizations are invited to become a partner in the project.

The easiest is by simply agreeing to promote the Happiness Month to their staff during October. Wasco County, Mosier City Council, The Next Door and others participated this way last year by signing up employees to the daily inspirational emails and by taking a few minutes at the start of meetings to have people list things they are grateful for.

Businesses can also become a partner, spreading the word to customers through social media, newsletters and in-store signage, randomly giving

away small items to customers through the month, or by offering a free class or event during October that is open to the public.

Organizers are interested in any ideas to help make the month happier: Last year Bridgside in Cascade Locks gave out free hugs on Fridays, The Cabin in Stevenson featured free hand massages, the Hobby Shop in Hood River hosted a family game night, and Urban Paper ran a Happiness Journal-making workshop in The Dalles.

This year, businesses can also "Sponsor a Cynic" by nominating someone who is willing to take up the three habits for the month and then offering something to keep them in-



Staff and residents at Flagstone Senior Living in The Dalles chuckle during a Gorge Happiness event last October.

spired such as a free coffee each week, a dinner at the end of the month or a donation to a charity.

Partner companies who join will be featured in posters to

be posted throughout the Gorge in September, as well as on the website and social media promotions. To sign up, visit the website at www.GorgeHappiness.org and con-

tact emily@openintelligenceagency.com by Sept. 1. Over 120 different companies and organizations participated last year in seven towns in the Gorge.



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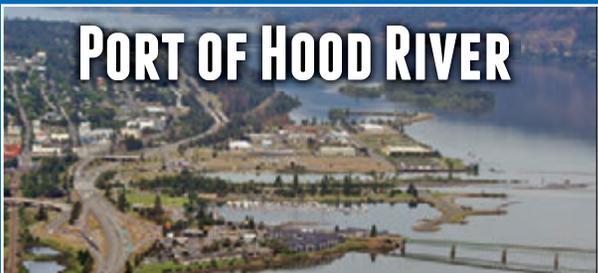
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Food bank garden feeds community

By **TRISHA WALKER**

HOOD RIVER — The garden behind FISH Food Bank on Tucker Road, next to Spirit of Grace Church, fulfills a simple, yet important, mission: To provide clients with equal access to fresh, nutritious produce and teach the community how to grow their own food.

And the garden has expanded considerably over the years thanks to Spirit of Grace's commitment as a congregation to tackle hunger in the Gorge.

During an August FISH board meeting, Garden Coordinator Susan Randolph, volunteers Dan Ball, Dennis Carlson and Becky Montgomery, and Spirit of Grace Pastor David King took board members on a tour of the garden to explain its mission, growing techniques, teaching opportunities and the continuous need for more help.

Randolph said that surveys show one in five Gorge residents miss meals; FISH Board President Marianne Durkin said the four food banks in Hood River County — located in Hood River, Odell, Parkdale and Cascade Locks — see a combined average of 400 families each month, and the food bank garden helps meet demand.

Randolph shared statistics from the garden's three years of production in conjunction with FISH: In 2015, approximately 500 volunteer hours harvested 2,581 pounds of food from the garden; in 2016, more than 1,000 volunteer hours brought in 2,131 pounds, and so far this year, over 300 volunteer hours have so far brought in more than 400 pounds of food — "but we've hardly harvested anything yet," she said.

What's grown in Hood River's FISH garden reflects the needs of

clients.

"Everything we grow goes to the food bank," Randolph said, gesturing to the 800 square foot space. "The clients really are our customers. We grow food for them."

Staples like onions and potatoes are popular but often in short supply, so volunteers grow those staples. There was also a request for "greens and salad stuff," Randolph said, so they're also growing tomatoes, peppers, kale, chard, broccoli and cucumbers, largely thanks to a seed donation by the Rockford Grange this year.

Another benefit: Everything harvested is delivered directly to the food bank shelves.

"Growing produce right here on site means we don't have to transport anything; we can pick exactly when it's ripe, and can identify the food clients like, what's productive for us to grow."

Ultimately, Randolph envisions a garden with "lots of perennials and produce, (where) people come and graze and see how easy it is to grow their own food."

The garden and food bank kitchen also serve as education centers. It's now an OSU Master Gardener project, as Randolph recently completed training. This will bring more volunteers into the garden, she said, as well as provide one-on-one learning opportunities for those wishing to expand their own growing skills.

Everyone from school groups to medical professionals have come to the garden to learn about the program and work. Ball said young people are particularly encouraged.

"Fewer and fewer people are



PHOTO BY
TRISHA WALKER

FISH Garden Coordinator Susan Randolph conducts a tour at the Food Bank garden.

involved in agriculture," he said, "and it's good to know where food comes from."

Plus, younger energy "adds to the fun. But they're also learning something valuable," he added. "We provide fresh produce for the community, but we learn a lot, too."

Randolph said that pest control has been an unwritten but huge aspect of her job.

"I've learned a lot about go-phers, slugs and aphids this year," she said.

See **FOOD BANK**, page 12



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FOOD BANK

Continued from page 11

The garden's produce grows alongside flowers in an effort to reduce chemical use, Randolph said, as well as to attract pollinators. It's working — so far this year, she's only had to apply "a tiny bit of soapy water" to keep pests at bay.

Buckwheat also takes up a quarter of the garden, another natural pest controller that also feeds the soil, said Carlson.

"I'm trying to be as progressive as I can (in the garden)," said Randolph. "It's also why people are interested — we're all learning together, and we can swap ideas."

While the garden gets much of the attention, the food bank kitchen also plays a role in education. Any hunger-focused group can use the facility — kitchen and meeting room — for free, said King, pointing to the OSU Food Preservers program, which meets at the food bank on Thursdays, and 4-H groups.

Randolph's position is paid for by Spirit of Grace, who also donated the land on which the new

FISH building sits. The garden is much older than the three years it's been used in conjunction with the present food bank, but its reach is much broader thanks to the updated food bank facility.

The garden is a ministry of Spirit of Grace, explained King; the congregation has made hunger issues their issue and has grown food in support of FISH for the past 10 years. It's what led to the donation of land for the new FISH site, said Randolph, and why the church continues to work behind the scene in the garden.

While the FISH board concentrates primarily on collecting and distributing food, "as a church, we find ways to help supplement that," said King.

FISH and the garden work in tandem, yet with their own sets of helpers. Garden volunteers come regularly to pull weeds and pick produce, with Spirit of Grace "keeping it all together," Randolph said.

They collaborate with a variety of organizations, including The Next Door, Klahre House, OSU Master Gardeners, Arts in Education in the Gorge, and church and

school groups — from all over the state.

"It's really cool to see all of this come together in three years," she said. "It started with organizations all doing their own thing, and I feel like we've all come together to create a higher purpose."

Randolph calls the work in the garden "a perpetual mission to feed people," and as such, she has many wish list items and general needs. FISH has an online giving system, said King, but those who wish to give to the garden are asked to mail checks — designated to the garden fund — to Spirit of Grace Church, 1140 Tucker Road, Hood River, OR 97031 or FISH Food Bank, 1767 12th Street No. 147, Hood River, OR 97031. Gardeners with extra produce are also encouraged to drop off donations in the tote box located in front of the food bank.

Those interested in volunteering or donating items on the garden wish list should contact Randolph at 339-368-0233 or surandolph22@gmail.com.



PHOTO BY TRISHA WALKER

Cabbages and other vegetables grow in tandem with flowers in the FISH Food Bank garden, a natural pest deterrent.



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MCMC considers selling visiting health services

By NEITA CECIL

THE DALLES — Mid-Columbia Medical Center is considering options for its unprofitable visiting health service that include keeping it but reducing losses, or selling it to another company. MCMC officials hope for the former.

Visiting health, like all services of MCMC, are under review as the hospital seeks to improve its finances.

MCMC Chief Executive Officer Dennis Knox wants a decision on what to do about visiting health before the end of the fiscal year, in December, and hopefully much sooner than that.

One critic of the idea of selling visiting health, who asked not to be named, said staffers were worried that a private, for-profit company would cut wages and workers, and reduce the operational area of visiting health, which would impact patients and families.

Visiting health provides services that are paid 100 percent by Medicare, the unnamed source said. Clients have to be homebound, and services include post-operative care, wound care, infusions, and other services.

Its 70 employees include nurses, occupational thera-

pists, physical therapists, speech therapists, and others.

The service has been around for about 40 years.

The unnamed critic said visiting health is on a different electronic medical record (EMR) system than the hospital, making it more difficult to work smoothly with the hospital.



Dennis Knox

Knox found that switching visiting health to the hospital's EMR, which is called EPIC, would cost \$750,000, plus annual maintenance fees. Knox said no thanks.

The unnamed source said having different electronic systems "makes it easier to divorce us."

The source said different

EMRs has resulted in problems like doctors saying they created a plan for a patient in EPIC, and then visiting health has to say, "Well, we're not on EPIC, like we've told you."

Based on the first six months of the year, the visiting health program was set to lose \$1.7 million in 2017, not including the losses due to the bad winter, Knox said.

That was a surprise to the 70 employees at visiting health, he said, who were under the impression it was a profitable service of MCMC.

He surmised that past hospital leadership, in describing how visiting health was doing, perhaps focused on the number of patients seen daily, which is a lot, rather than overall numbers.

Visiting health nurses and therapists make about 210 in-home visits a day, or 50,000 a year, across a five-county area in Oregon and Washington.

It operates in Wasco, Hood River and Sherman counties in Oregon and Klickitat and Skamania in Washington.

It plays a crucial role in reducing hospital readmissions, because if a patient is readmitted to the hospital within 30 days of discharge, the hospital will not get paid for it,

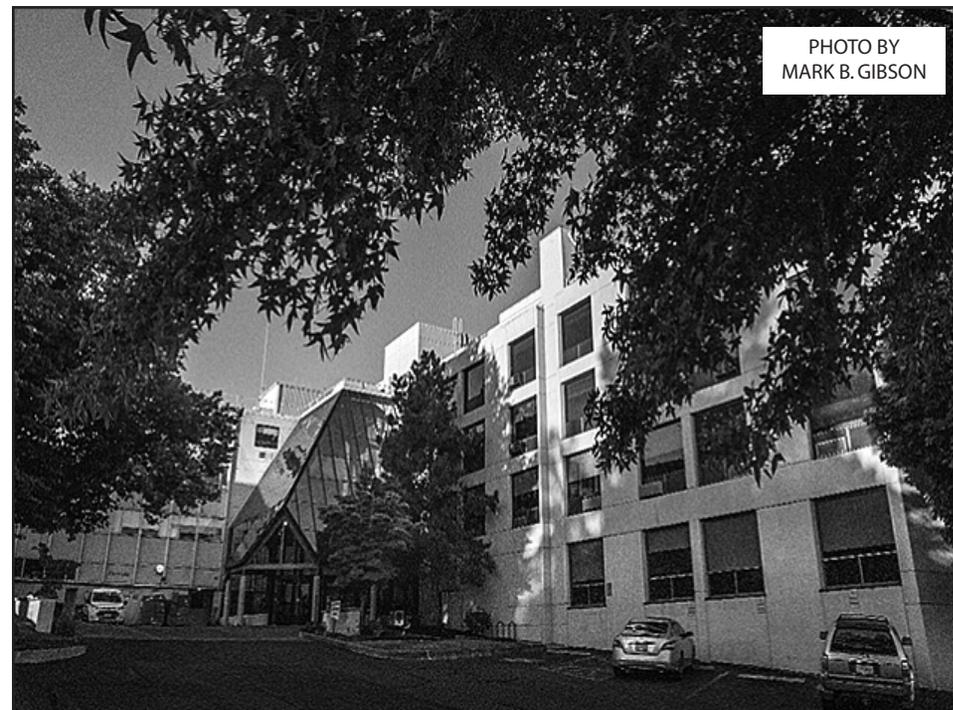


PHOTO BY MARK B. GIBSON

A glass-faced atrium, which serves as an east-side entrance to the hospital, is touched by the morning sun at Mid-Columbia Medical Center.

Knox said.

For that reason, some unprofitability is tolerable with visiting health, because it ultimately saves the hospital money in terms of preventing 30-day readmissions. He didn't know how much unprofitability could be acceptable.

"It's vitally important for us at MCMC to have this service," Knox said of visiting health. But, he added, it has to be viable as well. The ideal scenario is for the existing service to be successful, he said.

He met with the top staff of visiting health June 30 and said, "we have to take a new look at this."

In the six weeks since, some changes have already been found at visiting health that will improve service and save money. They have improved

billing and collections, and are looking at "rightsizing" their service area, he said.

That could mean long trips to visit one patient may be handed off to another organization to handle, he said.

The unnamed source said shrinking the service area will put patients at a disadvantage.

The source said fees are fixed for visiting health, so the only way to make things profitable is to reduce payroll or limit the kinds of patients that will be seen.

Knox said as the hospital was considering other options for visiting health, they were contacted by a for-profit company out of San Francisco called Impact Healthcare.

Officials with that company came to The Dalles last week, but have not been in contact with the hospital since, Knox

said.

He said the sale would actually be a transfer of assets, "because who would buy a service that's losing \$1.7 million?"

Partners in Care, a non-profit out of Bend, has also expressed an interest, but has not taken further steps.

Knox said Impact Healthcare and other for-profit visiting health services also tend to provide hospice care, which is profitable.

The Dalles area has two hospice services. Neither is connected to the hospital.

Knox said there was "high anxiety" at visiting health when the news hit of a possible sale to another company.

"The only way to address that is to meet with them directly."

He did that on Aug. 14.

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SAPA invests in safety in annual event

By **JESSE BURKHARDT**

THE DALLES — Although many area residents may not even realize there is still an aluminum manufacturing facility operating in The Dalles, the SAPA Extrusion North America plant at 2929 W. Second St. continues to expand and invest in its growing work force.

On Thursday, Aug. 24, SAPA — which stands for Scandinavian Aluminum Profile Association — held its second annual “Health and Safety Day” on the front lawn of its facility, and

dozens of employees turned out to enjoy a free lunch catered by Beachwood Eatery in The Dalles.

The SAPA plant in The Dalles takes in scrap aluminum and melts it down into billets, which look like long solid pipes made of aluminum. The billets are shipped to customers around the world.

“It’s then made into a variety of products our customers want,” explained Terrie Methvin, human resources coordinator for SAPA.

SAPA is relatively new to the

community. The global company — based in Oslo, Norway — came to The Dalles on Sept. 21, 2015, when SAPA purchased what was then called Northwest Aluminum Specialties and began expanding.

Methvin said SAPA’s concentration on employee safety is one of the reasons she enjoys working for the manufacturing giant, which has nearly 30 plants across the United States and more than 100 facilities worldwide.

“Nationwide, we have a safety

day each year. The company is very safety-conscious,” said Methvin, who began working in the industry 32 years ago, as an environmental secretary for what was then the big Martin-Marietta Aluminum Co. smelter in The Dalles. “I love it.”

Although the big aluminum plant in The Dalles is long gone, Peter Hedman, director of SAPA’s North American Technical Center in Portland, said aluminum is still a hot commodity.

“Aluminum is in high demand, and SAPA is the largest alu-

minum extrusion company in the world,” Hedman said.

According to Hedman, the plant in The Dalles is critical to SAPA’s operations.

“We buy scrap on the market and bring it here,” Hedman explained. “It ends up in all kinds of different shapes. They are busy here constantly. Having this plant really helps with supply and demand. It drives supply for other operations.”

Michael Wissig, SAPA’s environmental health and safety manager in The Dalles, pointed

out that market trends for aluminum products are very positive, and the plant in The Dalles now has 72 employees.

“People may not know we’re here or what we’re doing, but since last year we’ve increased our staff by about 10 people,” Wissig said. “We have 72 employees now. We’re slowly growing.”

Wissig said that when SAPA purchased Northwest Aluminum two years ago, there

See SAPA, page 17



PHOTO BY
JESSE BURKHARDT

Peter Hedman (center), director of SAPA’s North American Technical Center in Portland, came to the company’s aluminum casting plant in The Dalles to help emphasize the importance of employee safety in the plant’s operations. Workers were treated to a free lunch catered by Beachwood Eatery as part of the day’s activities.

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NEW LODGINGS

HOOD RIVER — Andreas Ochoa of Rogue Adventures Group power-washes the roof of Hood River Adventure Lodge at Oak and 13th streets as workers prepare for opening on about Sept. 15. The signs of the former Prater's Motel are down, and improvements include wooden privacy screens and metal planting boxes. Changes to the investment group structure contributed to stalling progress on the project since summer 2016, according to Ochoa.

All Seasons Carpet Cleaning & Restoration opens in TD

THE DALLES — All Seasons Carpet Cleaning and Restorations is a newly established locally owned and operated carpet cleaning, janitorial and restoration business serving the greater Columbia Gorge Area.

Jared Snyder, owner operator, has a long history in the detail cleaning industry spanning from high end yachts and RV's to residential and commercial projects of all sizes.

In 2017, Snyder obtained a loan from Mid-Columbia Economic Development District (MCEDD) to help with the start-up of his business. The MCEDD Loan Program is available to entrepreneurs, start-up businesses and existing businesses

doing business in the five county (Sherman, Hood River, Wasco, Klickitat and Skamania) Mid-Columbia Area.

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fiers, and deep extraction tools.

All Seasons Carpet Cleaning and Restoration is located in The Dalles, Oregon and can be contacted at 541-296-5660 to schedule an appointment or learning more about this business. More information about All Seasons Carpet Cleaning & Restoration can be found at its website, all-seasons-carpet-cleaning-and-restoration.business.site and on Facebook.

This loan program is part of MCEDD's efforts to strengthen and support the region's economy. Contact Eric Nerdin at 541-296-2266 or eric@mcedd.org for more information on MCEDD's Loan Program.

SAPA

Continued from page 15

were just 55 employees. And SAPA continues to invest in its local operations.

"We're getting better equipment and becoming more efficient," Wissig said. "We're in the process of completely rebuilding one of our lines for a streamlined process to make casting easier and safer."

Wissig said taking care of its workers has always been a large part of the company's culture, and the annual "Health and Safety Day" is designed to help protect employees.

"It's not a focus on safety, it's a celebration of safety," Wissig said. "This is a day when people identify site-specific hazards. There is a concentration on individual jobs and individual hazards with each of our workers,

and mitigating those hazards as much as possible."

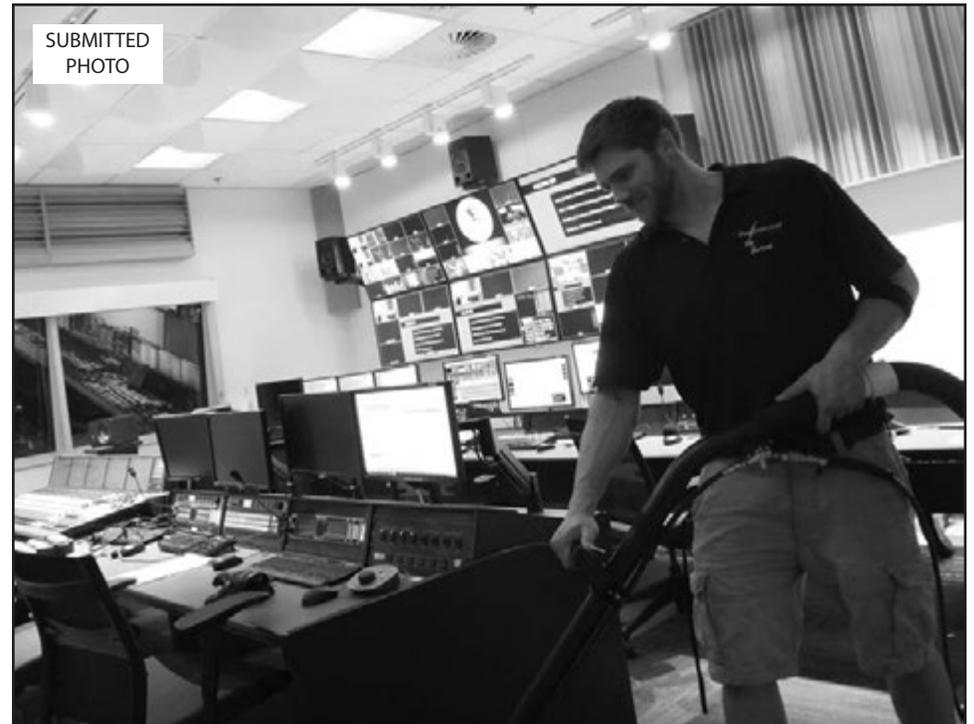
Hedman said SAPA's extra efforts to take care of its employees are appreciated. "It is a good place to work, and a good company," Hedman said. "They are taking care of their people well by putting an emphasis on safety. We want everybody to go home in the same condition they came to work in — with all their fingers and toes."



PHOTO BY
JESSE BURKHARDT

Beachwood Eatery owners Ken and Nancy Katlim cooked up and served a variety of treats for dozens of employees at the SAPA aluminum plant in The Dalles Thursday as the company observed its second annual "Health and Safety Day."

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All Seasons Carpet Cleaning and Restorations Owner Jared Snyder has a long history in the detail cleaning industry.

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Trump puts HR County closer to storm relief funds

By **PATRICK MULVIHILL**

WASHINGTON, D.C. — President Donald Trump signed a disaster declaration for Oregon in August, putting Hood River and three other Oregon counties in line for recovery funds in the wake of January's ice storm.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency announced Aug. 8 disaster reimbursement has opened up on a cost-sharing basis for recovery work. That includes repairing or replacing infrastructure damaged by severe winter storms, flooding, landslides and mudslides during Jan. 7-10 in Hood River, Columbia, Deschutes and Josephine counties.

Trump's declaration does not guarantee any counties money, but it pushes them forward in an approval process for governments seeking FEMA aid.

If successful, Hood River County could receive nearly \$418,000 for local public and nonprofit agencies.

"This is for costs to repair

physical damages to the community, and public and nonprofit agencies ... roads, bridges and other public facilities that results from the major winter emergency," Barb Ayers, county emergency manager, said.

Possible recipients include Hood River County, city and county public works, Hood River County School District, Columbia Gorge Community College, Providence Health and Services, the ports of Hood River and Cascade Locks, and the City of Cascade Locks.

The county also qualified for the federal SBA loan program, which was opened only to storm-damaged communities. The program helps local small businesses recover from economic damage with low interest loans.

Ayers called FEMA's cost recovery process "arduous." The county's emergency management department, working through the Oregon Office of Emergency Management, has to meet a certain

floor of damages with detailed justification.

To be considered, the county has to declare a local emergency and demonstrate major impacts. The state also has to meet a threshold of damages and declare a state emergency. Then the governor requests a presidential declaration to free up federal recovery dollars.

Oregon declared a disaster in early 2017, including Jan. 7-20 as impacted days.

Trump and FEMA denied the initial request, but Oregon appealed the decision. The federal government reversed course and approved a scaled down version of the request this month — it shrunk the storm-stricken days to three: Jan. 7-10.

Following Trump's approval, a handful of selected counties now passes into a second round of FEMA review and approvals.

Ayers said Hood River County held a series of local meetings with FEMA and OEM in March

and received positive feedback. "We made it through Round One of FEMA review. Round Two is coming soon," she said.

Because the presidential declaration dropped the incident dates from 12 to three, several counties fell out of consideration.

Andrew Phelps, OEM director, told emergency officials around the state in an email, "I know this disaster was a significant effort and burden on your communities and that is not fully reflected in the declaration, but we will work diligently to make sure federal assistance is distributed as efficiently and effectively as possible, and we will recoup as much of the costs associated with the January storms as possible."

Similarly, Oregon's Congressional Delegation sent out a joint statement lauding the partial federal disaster relief; however, the seven lawmakers said it "is likely to fall short of the more than \$17 million in damages" wreaked by



PABLO MARTINEZ MONSIVAIS, THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

January storms.

"This partial disaster declaration is a good first step toward providing desperately needed relief from the costly damage caused by the massive winter event that hit our state in January," the delegation said in a joint statement.

The Aug. 21 solar eclipse kept emergency response agencies

busy, but after the ordeal, Hood River and other eligible counties will work with local agencies, FEMA and OEM to go to bat again for disaster recovery assistance, Ayers said.

"We're certainly proud and excited to advocate successfully for, and work hard to help, local agencies impacted by the winter storms," Ayers said.

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