

Memorial Day SUNNYSIDE SUN

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Patrick Shelby/Sunnyside Sun

MEMORIAL DAY WEEKEND OF REMEMBRANCE — Sunnyside High School freshman and Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps member Marissa Galvan secures a flag in memory of a fallen veteran.

1,550 flags honor local vets

By Patrick Shelby

SUNNYSIDE — It was like a well-planned military field exercise, which began before the sun would fully light up the peaceful grounds for members of the VFW, American Legion and AMVETS, along with the public this

past Saturday.

They were respectfully mustering at Lower Valley Memorial Gardens to place more than 1,500 American flags on the graves of all veterans buried in Sunnyside.

More than 50 volunteers took part in the gathering, opening Memorial Day

weekend of remembrance activities that inspired patriotic participants to answer the two-hour call of duty at 7800 Van Belle Road.

For Sunnyside High School senior Oscar Macias, he chose to pay his respect for those who served and had made the

ultimate sacrifice to their country, prior to reporting for active duty into the United States Marine Corps in a couple of months.

“My family ancestors until now, like we were poor and always farmers and couldn’t go to school. And, my family is first

generation here in the United States that’s able to go to school. My sisters, brothers and cousins are all able to attend universities,” Macias honorably revealed, while he searched for S.O. Record’s cemetery marker and learned that he was a

see **Memorial Day**, page A2

Lender objects to Astria plans

By Jennie McGhan

SUNNYSIDE — Astria Health was granted the motion to obtain Chapter 11 relief in the form \$28 million in debtor in possession financing on May 9.

JMB Capital Partners Lending is, according to bankruptcy papers, the lender.

Lapis Advisers of San Francisco objected to the request for relief in U.S. Bankruptcy Court Eastern District of Washington at Yakima, citing a number of issues with Astria’s restructuring plan.

“The lenders (Lapis) comprise more than two-thirds of the debtors’ (Astria) nearly \$75 million of secured funded debt in these proceedings,” the objection filed by Attorney Mark Northrup of Seattle’s Miller Nash Graham & Dunn on behalf of Lapis and UMB Bank states.

A search through Lapis’ portfolio revealed the firm loaned Astria \$35.4 million for the purchase of Yakima Regional Medical and Cardiac Center, as well as Toppenish Community Hospital in 2017.

That was confirmed in court documents showing Lapis loaned Astria another \$10 million this past January.

That’s on top of loans by Banner Bank amounting to more than \$27 million, a loan from MidCap Financial in the amount of \$10.7 million and another \$5 million owed GE HFS for equipment at the Toppenish and Yakima hospitals.

Northrup told the *Sunnyside Sun* he was unwilling to comment beyond the court documents without authorization from his client.

When Lapis Advisers were contacted, the *Sunnyside Sun* was referred to a case database for answers.

In the objection, it is stated Astria approached Lapis in January. “The debtors’ storyline depicts an upstart hospital system victimized by the botched roll out of a critical hospital billing and collection system in the second year of its integration process.”

The billing and collections system not working is not

see **Astria**, page A3

Slave trade is alive in U.S.

Raising awareness is ‘tough’, victim advocate says

By Julia Hart

GRANDVIEW — When Sean Levesque stood before the Rotary Club last Wednesday, he issued a stark warning: “This topic makes people uncomfortable.”

His topic — human trafficking and its impact on labor force in the United States. “It’s really modern-day slavery,” the well-spoken Levesque told the Rotarians.

“We were trained to

believe that slavery ended following the Civil War. But if you use coffee, tea, chocolate, sugar, bananas or wear clothes, there is a good chance forced labor was involved,” he commented.

Spreading awareness about the dangers of human trafficking is a full-time mission for Levesque, who is on a two-year “Love2Hope” mission to bring trafficking awareness presentations to groups like Rotary and schools, churches and high school students.

Sex trafficking is fast surpassing guns and drugs as top criminal activities in the United States.

“Make no mistake,” he added, “... guns and drugs play a huge part in exploitation of humans, especially in sex trafficking. “Sex trafficking is fueled

see **Slave**, page A3



Jacqueline Renteria/City of Sunnyside

STACKHOUSE BRIDGE RIBBON CUTTING — (left to right) Bill Preston, WSDOT, Sunnyside City Manager Martin Casey, Mayor Julia Hart, Public Works and Community Development Director Shane Fisher, HLA Engineer Mike Uhlman and Ron Cowin of SVID, take part in commemorating the completion of the nearly \$1.07 million Stackhouse Bridge project on Friday morning.

New Stackhouse Bridge opens for holiday drivers

By Patrick Shelby

SUNNYSIDE — The city officially reopened Stackhouse Bridge, located at the intersection of Stackhouse Street and NW Crescent Avenue, to Memorial Day weekend travelers, following a celebratory ribbon cutting

ceremony commemorating the completion of the nearly \$1.07 million project on Friday morning, May 24.

“We’re very happy that the bridge is open for the Memorial Day weekend and for access to Harrison Hill. It reopens an important pathway for our public safety departments, which restores

and improves community access,” Sunnyside City Manager Casey Martin explained.

Highmark Concrete Contractors, LLC, were awarded the contract on Jan. 7.

The original plan for

see **Stackhouse**, page A3

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