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B1 | A8

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# THE OKANOGAN COUNTY CHRONICLE

March 9, 2022

Essential Reading for Okanogan and Ferry counties • Year 112 No. 72

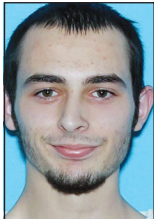
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## Man charged with murder in couple's deaths

By DEE CAMP  
The Chronicle

OKANOGAN — A Chesaw man was charged Feb. 25 in Okanogan County Superior Court with killing an Omak couple who had gone to check on property they owned south of Chesaw.

David O. Covey Sr., 80, and his wife, Geralyn, 66, were the subjects of an extensive search



Harrington

Feb. 15-16 after they did not return from a Feb. 13 trip to their property on Nealey Road. Their bodies were found on Feb. 16.

Dylan Jay Harrington, 25, is charged with two counts of first-degree murder with a firearm enhancement, two counts of unauthorized removal or concealment of body and two counts of theft of a motor vehicle. The murder charges are considered "most serious offenses" under the state's three strikes law.

Harrington remains at large. An arrest warrant, with nationwide extradition, has been issued.

According to a report by Okanogan County Sheriff's Office Det. Kreg Sloan, the sheriff's office received a report Feb. 13 that a woman found a locked truck parked at Nealey Road and Mountain View Drive with a dog under the vehicle. The woman reported seeing tracks going up the hill; she took the dog for safekeeping and left a note for the owners.

Attempts to contact the truck's owner were unsuccessful, said the report, which was filed with the charging document as an affidavit of probable cause.

Two days later, Deborah Springer,

Omak, reported her father and step-mother, the Coveys, missing since Feb. 13.

A search of the area and the Coveys' home on Miller Road ensued. Three or four feet of snow were on the ground at the Chesaw property; the Coveys' fifth-wheel trailer was parked on the property, but no one was inside, the report said.

Footprints led to a nearby property with a broken-down cabin/house. While sheriff's searchers, Springer and her husband were there, her husband reported seeing a man in a camouflage jacket and dark pants at the back

of the cabin, according to the report. The man ran from the area and could not be located.

David Covey's phone was later located at his Omak home, and nothing appeared to be out of place, the report said.

On Feb. 16, the couple's other two dogs were found at the broken-down house. A motorcycle registered to the Coveys was found at the house; family members indicated it should not have been there, the report said.

Permission was obtained to search

See **CHARGED**, page A5

## Taking flight



BROCK HIRE | Special to The Chronicle

Balloons fly high above the Methow Valley on March 4 during the Winthrop Balloon Roundup. The three-day event ran through Sunday.

## Governors update mask mandates

Most indoor masking rules go off March 11 in Washington, Oregon and California

OLYMPIA — Indoor COVID-19 mask mandates implemented almost two years ago will be lifted for the most part late March 11.

"With declining case rates and hospitalizations across the west, California, Oregon and Washington are moving together to update their masking guidance," said a joint statement from the three states' governors. "After 11:59 p.m. on March 11, California, Oregon and Washington will be adopting new indoor mask policies and move from mask requirements to mask recommendations in schools."

State policies do not change federal requirements, which still include masks on public transit.

"We've continued to monitor data from our state Department of Health, and have determined we are able to adjust the timing of our statewide mask requirement," said Gov. Jay Inslee. "While this represents another step forward for Washingtonians, we must still be mindful that many within our communities remain vulnerable."

"Many businesses and families will continue choosing to wear masks, because we've learned how effective they are at keeping one another safe. As we transition to this next phase, we will continue to move forward together carefully and cautiously."

The new date does not change any other aspect of the updated mask requirements Inslee announced in late February, he said.

Masks will still be required in certain settings including health care, corrections facilities and long-term care facilities. The state State Department of Health will issue new guidance for kindergarten through 12th grade schools this week, said Inslee.

As of March 2, with data current through March 1, Okanogan County had 110 new cases of COVID-19 reported from Feb. 23 to March 1 and 91 cases the previous week. The incidence rate — number of cases per 100,000 population per rolling 14-day period — was 466.

There have been 80 COVID deaths attributed to Okanogan County since the pandemic began two years ago,

See **MASKS**, page A5

## Update: Weed in Okanogan County

County commissioners extend moratorium on weed farms

By JOSEPH CLAYPOOLE  
The Chronicle

OKANOGAN — High growth for cannabis in Okanogan and other counties may soon be undermined by anticipated lows from shipping, manufacturing and licensing issues.

Cannabis sales in Okanogan, and across the state, reached new highs this past year alongside alcohol consumption, according to data from the Washington State Liquor and Cannabis Board.

Data for Okanogan County show \$161,865 in excise tax revenue for November 2019, just a few months before the COVID-19 pandemic swept across the world. By April 2021, revenue had more than doubled for Okanogan County and has since settled into



the high \$200,000 range, all spurred by an increase in retail sales during the pandemic.

"We saw a definite increase in foot traffic," said Haila Hubbard, store manager for Fire Cannabis Co., Omak.

"We started to offer curbside service as well to help with demand."

Fire Cannabis Co. is the leading retailer for cannabis in Okanogan County, according to retail sales data from 502data, an online data portal for statewide and county cannabis sales.

The name for 502data hails from Initiative 502, passed in 2012, which defined and legalized small amounts of marijuana products for adults 21 and over, taxes for those products and where revenue from the taxes should go.

For the most recent fiscal year on record — July 1, 2020, to June 30, 2021 — total income from cannabis taxes and license fees across Washington totaled \$559.5 million, a 41.4 percent increase from the previous fiscal year. Okanogan County has seen an increase of 64 percent in retail sales alone.

Northeast Tri-County Health District

See **WEED**, page A7

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## Grant funds law enforcement partnership

OMAK — A community law enforcement partnership has been formed by the Okanogan County Community Coalition, Okanogan County Sheriff’s Office and Omak Police Department.

The agencies received funding from the state Department of Commerce to formulate and implement strategies that:

- Reduce crime.
- Increase knowledge of law enforcement duties.
- Bridge gaps between community groups.
- Increase cultural understanding.
- Increase youth leadership.

The goal is to build relationships between community and law enforcement in Omak, Okanogan, Tonasket and Pateros, according to a coalition announcement.

Sheriff Tony Hawley said the project will allow his office to build more relationships across the county.

“I’m looking forward to conversations that will provide valuable information and insight from the community level about their needs and concerns as they relate to public safety,” he said.

Coalition Executive Directory Stacey Okland said the program was created by Senate Bill 5353 in the 2020-21 legislative session. She pointed to previous grants and success the agencies had with them.

“Relationship building is key to creating trust in the community,” said Omak Police Chief Dan Christensen. “Learning about each other is always what bridges separation and often leads to trust an understanding. To provide effective law enforcement services we absolutely need the help of our community.”

The groups plan several ways for people to interact with the agencies, including “Soda with the sheriff,” and “Coffee with the chief.”

Community walks, surveys, a citizen’s academy and other activities are planned.

Increased patrols, plus alcohol and marijuana compliance checks also are planned.

## Library solar panel project hits snag

WINTHROP — The new Winthrop Public Library building has hit a snag in funding for rooftop solar panels.

The building is under construction and scheduled to open in June.

One criterion for solar panel grant funding is that the recipient building must have a one-year history of electrical bills to qualify. Since the building is new, there aren’t any electrical bills to provide for the grant application.

Mayor Sally Ranzau assured the town council during its March 2 meeting that the snag won’t delay opening, set for June 11. Holes have been cut and necessary electrical wires run for the panels, ensuring that no major construction will be needed once the panels arrive.

In other business, the council:

- Renewed Ranzau as proxy to sign for the city’s three shares during the Foghorn Ditch at the company’s annual meeting.
- Appointed Jean Bodeau to the Methow Watershed Council.
- Approval David Ebenger’s salary as municipal court judge.

His salary is set at \$675 per calendar month, along with a \$200 yearly reimbursement for travel, supplies and other related work expenditures.

State Indoor Mask Requirements Starting March 12, 2022

Local governments are still able to enact local mask requirements. Many individuals will choose to continue to wear masks. Please be kind and compassionate.

✓ Still Required:

- Healthcare and medical facilities, including hospitals, outpatient, dental facilities and pharmacies
- Long-term care settings
- Public transit, taxis, and rideshare vehicles (federal requirement)
- Correctional facilities
- Private businesses and local governments that want to require masks for their employees, customers or residents

✗ Not Required:

- Schools, childcare facilities and libraries
- Restaurants and bars
- Houses of worship
- Gyms, recreation centers and indoor athletic facilities
- Grocery stores, businesses and retail establishments

\*Private businesses can still require masks if they choose. Please respect the rules of the room.

JAY INSLEE

WASHINGTON GOVERNOR’S OFFICE  
Chart shows areas where masks will and won’t be required.

### MASKS

from page A1

and 8,240 positive cases. Among cases reported Feb. 23 to March 1, 21 were in the zero to age 19 age group, 26 for 20-39, 35 for 40-59, 18 among those

60-79, nine for 80-plus, and one unreleased.

More females than males have been sickened by the virus — 4,036 to 3,937 with 267 unknown — in Okanogan County, but more men have died 37 to 25 with 18 unknown.

# School districts investigate allegations of racist remarks

OKANOGAN – Okanogan and Grand Coulee Dam school districts are investigating an allegation that racist remarks were made by Okanogan fans against a Lake Roosevelt player during a girls’ basketball play-off game.

An assistant coach for Lake Roosevelt alleged “monkey noises” were directed toward a Lake Roosevelt player who is of African American and Native American descent.

The game occurred Feb. 18 in Okanogan, with the Bulldogs winning, 52-44. Both teams advanced to regional

and then state play.

In a joint statement, Okanogan Superintendent Ashley Goetz and Grand Coulee Superintendent Paul Turner said an article in another newspaper “immediately presumes the allegations brought against Okanogan fans to be true.”

Upon receipt of the allegations, athletic directors and superintendents in both districts began investigating and have been in continual communication, said Goetz and Turner.

A bias report filed with the

Washington Interscholastic Activities Association “is taken very seriously with a thorough investigation being conducted which includes review of multiple game films and student interviews,” said the superintendents.

In February, WIAA issued a statement saying it has worked with member schools concerning several incidents involving racist taunts and actions at athletic contests.

“These kinds of behaviors have no place in our schools and communities, and the WIAA encourages students,

spectators, officials, coaches and administrators to help create safe and fair environments for competition,” said the organization, which oversees school sports in the state.

“WIAA staff will continue to follow up with leadership of the schools and the leagues involved to discuss prevention strategies.”

The goal is to ensure that opposing students and fans are treated with respect, said WIAA.

A bias reporting form is available at wiaa.com.

## Bills clarify police use of force measures

OLYMPIA — Gov. Jay Inslee has signed a pair of bills to clarify portions of the police reform package passed by the Legislature last year.

Last year, legislators passed a package of laws designed to establish clear expectations for officer behavior; set a baseline for the acceptable use of force, tactics and equipment, and put systems of accountability and transparency into place.

House Bills 1719 and 1735, passed this session, removed ambiguity from statute that had led some departments to stop using less lethal munitions and stop responding to community caretaking calls. Both bills had an emergency clause and are now in effect.

HB 1735 clarifies that officers can use force, subject to the newly established reasonable care standard, in behavioral health circumstances, for involuntary treatment commitments, in instances of child welfare, and other related circumstances.

Some law enforcement agencies contended that the new use of force standard prevented them from assisting designated crisis responders

and mental and behavioral health specialists with involuntary treatments and other community caretaking functions, said bill sponsor Reps. Jesse Johnson, D-Federal Way. That caused some law enforcement agencies to stop responding to community caretaking calls altogether.

“Law enforcement agencies now have the legal certainty they need to assist designated crisis responders, EMTs and firefighters with transporting those in need of involuntary treatment,” said Johnson.

“After meeting extensively with law enforcement leaders, rank and file officers, designated crisis responders, mental and behavioral health professionals, firefighters and EMTs, it became clear that more certainty was required in statute.

“Designated crisis responders often enter volatile and unstable situations, and it is vital that they have the support of law enforcement to safely do their job. The goal remains the same, de-escalation and limiting unnecessary police violence while still allowing police to do their job.”

HB 1719, sponsored by Rep. Dan Bronoske, D-Lakewood,

*“After meeting extensively with law enforcement leaders, rank and file officers, designated crisis responders, mental and behavioral health professionals, firefighters and EMTs, it became clear t hat more certainty was required in statute.”*

Rep. Jesse Johnson, R-Federal Way

clarifies that the prohibition on .50-caliber weapons only applies to rifles and not beanbag rounds or less-lethal munitions launchers.

HB 1054, part of the package passed in 2021, banned firearms over .50 caliber. Rifles sized over .50 caliber were developed as weapons to be used during war and have no appropriate role in the community, said Bronoske.

Some law enforcement agencies contend the provision inadvertently banned the use of less-lethal munitions launchers and beanbag rounds. While many agencies recognized the intent of the legislation was to encourage the use of less-lethal force and continued to use less-lethal alternatives, many

agencies discontinued their use, he said.

“This bill ensures that our law enforcement professionals have the full range of less-lethal alternatives to deadly force available to them,” said Bronoske. “I am happy that we were able to eliminate any ambiguity in the statute. The Legislature never intended to ban less-lethal alternatives and it is important that officers have every tool to prevent deadly force available to them.”

Both HB 1735 and HB 1719 are supported by the Washington Fraternal Order of Police, Washington Coalition for Police Accountability, Washington Association of Designated Crisis Responders and the Association of Washington Cities.

### CHARGED

from page A1

the property and structure, but there was no indication of the Coveys being there, the report said. The cabin was set up with a stove and solar panel, and was rough but livable. There also were a bed, firearms and ammunition, but no indication of the identity of the person who apparently had been there.

A hard-packed trail was located from the cabin to the Coveys’ fifth-wheel.

The report said a search warrant was issued for the cabin.

Early that evening, deputies located on the Covey property what appeared to be the burned remains of two bodies, said the report. They were found behind the fifth-wheel underneath a door and with some firewood. Other

evidence was found in the area and, later, at the Coveys’ fifth-wheel trailer.

Late that night, a deputy learned relatives of Harrington were concerned that he was out of control and needed help, the report said. Mail addressed to Harrington was among the evidence found at the Coveys’ fifth-wheel, the report said.

Sheriff’s deputies learned the next week that one reason the Coveys went to check on the property was a spike in the electric bill. A search warrant for utility records showed “a distinct spike in power at the end of November and December and January,” the report said.

Feb. 24 autopsies identified the bodies as those of David Covey Sr. and GERALYN Covey, the report said. Both had been shot.



OKANOGAN COUNTY SHERIFF’S OFFICE  
The Coveys’ fifth-wheel trailer.

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