

The

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Tenino School District is set to launch new School Resource Officer program

BY JAMES GOLDMEER
Independent/Sun News

Tenino students will return to campus on Tuesday, Sept. 1 with a dedicated School Resource Officer (SRO) following a joint agreement between the City of Tenino, the Tenino School District and the Thurston County Sheriff’s Office.

The three-way contract, currently being finalized, establishes an SRO program for the 2026-2027 school year and beyond. The officer will serve all four district campuses: Parkside Elementary, Tenino Elementary, Tenino Middle School and Tenino High School.

According to Tenino School District communications, SROs are commissioned law enforcement officers employed by their respective law enforcement agencies rather than the school district. A primary focus of the program is community-oriented policing designed to keep stu-



Photo by James Goldmeer
 Thurston County Sheriff’s Office and City of Tenino partner anticipate placing Deputy Nicole Smith across four district campuses starting Tuesday, Sept. 1.

dents out of the criminal justice system whenever possible while fostering positive relationships on campus.

Thurston County Sheriff Derek Sanders announced the partnership online, stating that the model mirrors an existing contract with the City of Rainier and Rainier School District.

Under the structure, the officer will primarily patrol within schools and school zones, but can assist with emergency calls in the city when needed to improve local response times.

“The school district and the city have been great partners throughout the process of getting this program into place quickly so there was no lapse in coverage during this transition,” Sanders stated. “We look forward to providing School Resource Officer services to the teaching staff and children of Tenino School District who deserve a safe learning environment.”

In a Monday city council meeting, TCSO Lt. Malcolm McIver said that Deputy Nicole Smith has submitted her paperwork for the assignment. Smith, a former Chehalis Tribal police officer who currently works graveyard patrol in the Grand Mound area, lives nearby in Lewis County and brings years

of local experience to the beat.

McIver commended Smith’s selection, highlighting her ability to connect with students and faculty.

“She just does a fantastic job with young (people),” McIver said. “She gets how that works and is a good communicator with young folks, as well as being able to mold well with the faculty. I think you’re getting a good one down here.”

In a joint statement published on the Tenino School District’s website, Superintendent Clint Endicott and former Tenino Police Chief Robert Auderer said that the role of a SRO encompasses three main functions: educator, informal counselor and law enforcer.

Endicott also stated the officer will join School-Based Threat Assessment Teams and participate in school assemblies and faculty meetings.

ROOF hosts back-to-school supply fair

The Rochester Organization of Families (ROOF) will host two back-to-school community events on Aug. 20 at the Rochester School District Office at 10140 US-12 in Rochester.

Activities begin with its annual Back-to-School Supply Fair from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Backpacks filled with school supplies will be available for local students. ROOF collects supply donations throughout early August and accepts financial contributions year-round to ensure every student has the tools needed to start classes.

ROOF’s mission is to address local needs by offering resources and programs for youth and families to foster a healthy, positive, and drug-free community.

At the same time, Rochester School District is offering a free car seat and booster check from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Safety technicians will be on site to inspect car seats, assist with proper installation, and ensure booster seats fit children safety ahead of the new school year.

Rochester School District is set to welcome students back on campuses spread out through the start of September:

For more information on school supply assistance or donating to ROOF, visit roof-communityservices.org.

Voters await certification of primary results

Thurston County election officials and voters are awaiting the certified outcomes of the Aug. 4 primary election, with upcoming state and county deadlines set to finalize the results.

The Thurston County Canvassing Board is scheduled to certify and transmit the official primary results on Tuesday, Aug. 18 (after press deadline) . Following county certification, the Washington Secretary of State is facing a deadline of Friday, Aug. 21, to officially certify the statewide results.

According to unofficial turnout data provided by Thurston County following the Aug. 4 primary, 31,701 ballots were cast, representing a total turnout of 14.72 percent of registered voters.

Local ballots featured several races for local positions, including the Rochester Regional Fire Authority, local court justices, and the Thurston County Sheriff. Voters also considered candidates representing them on the state and national level.

End of the Trail 4 hosts Customer Appreciation Day on Aug. 19

End of the Trail 4, 19615 Elderberry St. S.W., Grand Mound, is hosting a Customer Appreciation Day on Wednesday, Aug. 19 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. The event features raffles, free food, vendor booths, music and family fun as well as a fuel discount from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

For more information visit the Facebook and Instagram pages.

Tenino’s Community Service Center staff sends supplies to Spokane wildfire victims

BY JAMES GOLDMEER
Independent/Sun News

Local efforts to help victims of Eastern Washington’s wildfires reached across the state on Thursday as the Tenino Community Service Center dispatched food and essential supplies to Spokane.

The center, which has served the Tenino-Bucoda area for over 40 years, rallied alongside local Veterans of Foreign Wars post partners to gather water, rice, dry beans, pasta, flour, meat and extra provisions for families and emergency crews responding to the Spokane Complex fires.

“We are a very busy group at Tenino Community Service Center,” TCSC Director Jody Stoltz stated in an email. “Just this morning, (Aug. 13), we added 1,616 pounds of food to help families suffering and the first responders fighting the fires in Spokane. We do our part when it comes to helping those who need us all the most.”

The local relief effort comes as disaster response personnel work to manage the aftermath of the blazes in Eastern Washington. The fires, including the arson-ignited Old Trails Fire, were driven into Spokane neighborhoods by sustained winds, dry conditions and a heat dome.



Photo courtesy of Jody Stoltz
 Frank Persa and Jody Stoltz load 1,616 pounds of food into a van to be delivered to Spokane.

According to the California Interagency Incident Management, an agency helping Washington’s fire teams, the wildfires forced 60,000 people to evacuate and left 850 families without homes.

In a briefing on Aug. 13, fire officials in Spokane reported that containment efforts have made progress, though heat remains trapped within the burn zones.

“There is no expected perimeter growth, however the heavy fuels on the interior are retaining heat, and [the fires] will most likely consume them fully for the next couple of days and potentially beyond,” Ryan Swanson

said. Swanson is a fire behavior analyst monitoring the incident.

As some evacuation orders are lifted, the Spokane Regional Health District is advising residents returning to undamaged homes to take precautions against smoke, ash and chemical residue. Health officials are recommending the use of N95 respirators during cleanup and urging residents to discard food exposed to heat or power loss.

To support displaced families and crews working long shifts, regional relief agencies and local fire stations have outlined immediate donation needs. Organizations such as Partners

Inland Northwest and Second Harvest are requesting nonperishable food, clothing, diapers, hygiene products and financial gifts.

Emergency responders on the ground emphasized the impact of outside support for both displaced residents and first responders.

“Compassion matters,” Tom Clemo said. Clemo is a commander with California Interagency Incident Management Team 7. “These people have lost everything. Some of them, all that they have is the shirt on their back and the car they got in before they evacuated on that day... Stopping and checking in on these folks, it goes a long way to say hey, we’re thinking of you. We’re here for you.”

Some fire stations are accepting supplies for firefighters and the communities they are serving. Spokane officials are requesting items like socks, deodorant, eye drops, electrolyte drinks, protein bars, beef jerky, baby wipes and sunscreen. Monetary contributions are being directed to the City of Spokane’s H.O.M.E. Fund and the Red Cross.

The Tenino Community Service Center is also accepting donations and is seeking new volunteers for continuing local services.

Goldmeer joins DeVaul Publishing to lead Thurston County coverage

BY JAMES GOLDMEER
Independent/Sun News

DeVaul Publishing has named James Goldmeer as the company’s newest reporter for “The Tenino Independent” and “The Rochester Sun News,” bringing an Arizona journalist across state lines to bolster local print and digital reporting in rural Thurston County.

Goldmeer relocated 1,300 miles to Washington following two years of newsroom experience in Goodyear, Ariz. They step into a role previously shaped by area journalists Charlie Plante and Dan Fisher.

Goldmeer specializes in narrative-style storytelling after graduating from Northern Arizona University with a Bachelor of Science in Journalism and a certificate in professional communication. Their coverage was developed by their background of legislative and reporting internships in Phoenix. Most of their work focuses on community affairs, education, sustainability and social issues

“Local news is special,” Goldmeer said. This work gives us a way to make lifelong learning accessible and meaningful through reading. What draws me in is the opportunity to listen to neighbors, share knowledge and build unexpected connections that energize communities.”

Publisher Frank DeVaul said that Goldmeer brings a special talent to the local news team and is going to build and expand on the hyper-local news focus of The Independent/Sun News.

“James has a commitment to people, community and strong news values that we stress within our company,” DeVaul added. “They rose to the top of a strong and extensive candidate pool during our search. I have no doubt the community will embrace James and their reporting.”

In addition to contributing to weekly print editions, Goldmeer said they plan to expand DeVaul Publishing’s digital coverage to better serve readers across South Thurston County.



Photo by James Goldmeer
 Arizona journalist, James Goldmeer, relocates 1,300 miles to cover local stories in Tenino, Bucoda and Rochester.

Off the clock, Goldmeer brings an appreciation for art to their new home in the Pacific Northwest. They spend time collecting postcards, painting amateur watercolor works, reading horror novels and listening to

jazz albums.

Residents with news tips, story ideas or community announcements are encouraged to reach out to Goldmeer at jgoldmeer@devaulpublishing.com as they begin to learn the area.