

Employee spotlight: Medic mixes horseplay, rewarding job

You could say Mike Harness wears two hats in his personal and professional lives.

As a paramedic, Mike is focused, skilled and committed to serving the needs of his customers. As a cowboy, he has a vast knowledge of horses, the wilderness, herding cattle, horse-packing and probably lots of tales of the wide 'ol range.

Some EMS workers might want to just take it easy after an arduous day's work. But on a recent summer evening following a 12-hour shift, Mike donned his cowboy apparel and drove 50 miles to a weekly ranch roping, a gathering of wranglers who put their horses through some pretty amazing paces.

After arriving at the Butte Creek Boy Scout Ranch near the Scotts Mills area northeast of Salem, Mike's second job begins. He saddles his five-year-old quarterhorse "Jim" and prepares for a relaxing evening of riding and roping Longhorn calves and yearlings.

"You're working the skills of the horse, and the roping is done at a slower pace than calf roping [that is done] at a rodeo. It's a lot more intricate," explained Mike, 29. Indeed, it's clear the temperament and horse sense of both animal and rider are key to good teamwork. "He's willing to learn, which makes it easy for a trainer," said Mike, giving the good-natured Jim an affectionate pat on the muzzle.

Mike figures he's been riding,



horseshoeing, and training horses since he was 12. Besides Jim, he's training "Red" and a mare that he has stabled in southern Oregon. He buys, trains and sells the horses at a nice profit. Keeping

Mike company in all of this is "Bone," his half-Border collie sidekick.

Before training as a paramedic, Mike worked as a cowboy on spreads in Wyoming, Montana and Arizona. As much as he enjoyed the work, he eventually decided he wanted a future with more growth and opportunity. The people-centered work of the EMS industry held a lot of appeal to him. Mike attended an EMS school in Minnesota before heading home to Oregon. Notable though his cowboy accomplishments may

see Harness, page 2

Metro West is provider for Columbia County Rider

Residents of Columbia County are seeing another side of Metro West these days: as a provider of a range of transportation solutions.

Called Columbia County Rider, staff members are behind the wheels of several fixed-route, small commuter buses and a dial-a-ride service geared for the general public. Under its menu of services,

Columbia County Rider is also looking at arranging vanpools for specific groups of commuters in addition to tried-and-true programs such as Wheelchair and sedan transportation.

"Service encompasses just about everything," said Henry Heimuller, a

see Columbia County, page 4

Marketing team links seniors with much-needed Metro West services

When it comes to getting connected to exceptional and caring customer service, look no further than Karri and Keren.

With a busy summer behind them, Karri Bolman and Keren Cutler are spreading the word about Metro West services and programs in their respective territories. If you haven't met them yet, you'll soon experience the pleasure of their acquaintance—and enthusiasm.

As Marketing and Community Relations coordinators for Metro West, both have a solid grounding in the kinds of non-emergency medical services the company is famous for.

It's not a hard sell.

"Metro West offers premier service, whether it's wheelchair vans, Comfort Car or non-emergency service," said Keren, who covers Washington County.

"Our community service is amazing," Keren continues. She said it's first rate because of hiring. "We front end everything and everyone for quality," she said, referring to stringent background checks, safety training and other ongoing educa-



Karri Bolman

tion, and the professional appearance and demeanor of medics and EMTs.

"Metro West offers skilled and compassionate service. I think just about everyone wants to feel secure about the transportation provided for their loved one," Keren added.

Karri, who is new to the Marketing team, does

outreach in Multnomah, Clackamas and Clark counties. Karri previously worked in Dispatching and said her new job helps her see the bigger picture of EMS. "I talked to many of our clients already. Now I'm meeting them in person and extending the relationship," she said of her clients, who are mostly nursing home and care facility administrators and managers.

"It's great to get out and meet people and to talk about something I feel so strongly about," said Karri.

Their work has not gone unnoticed.

"I think both bring an incredible amount of passion to their jobs," said Business Development Director Erin Miller, who works with both women. "They really believe in the services (we provide) and convey it well."

Harness

continued from page 1

be, one of Mike's most outstanding attributes is his genuine devotion to helping other people, observe supervisors and ride-along partners. They say his compassion for others will carry



Ranch style: Mike Harness and "Jim" take a break from a roping exercise.

him to the top of the game.

After a fast-paced and exciting year and a half at Metro West, Mike enjoys relaxing as a horse trainer and the weekly roping events. Talking about horsemanship, he said, "If you're 'good,' you are never really done learning—just like paramedicine."

Food, folks, fun and the good 'ol summertime!

Metro West clients and their families were treated to a night of mirth and goodies at the Portland Children's Museum Aug. 5

"It was an appreciation event to acknowledge and thank our community partners for their hard work and dedication," said Erin Miller, talking about the personnel at area care facilities and hospitals. "Everyone had a great time," Miller added.

The facility lived up to its reputation as one of Portland's finest family destinations. Colorful and thought-provoking exhibits intrigued young and old alike. And in keeping with the atmosphere of fun on a summer's night, what could be more delectable than kid-friendly fare like pizza, a chocolate fountain and soda pop?

EMS Visions is published by the Public Relations and Marketing Department at Metro West Ambulance, and is an informational publication about EMS and the communities Metro West Ambulance serves.

Editor: Erin Miller
Writer: Steve Sinovic
Graphic Designer: Colin Miller

Need to reach us?
Please call 503-648-6658, fax 503-693-3216, or e-mail erin.miller@metrowest.fm

Partner spotlight: Pacific Gardens Care Center

Editor's note: The following is part of a series of articles that will profile Metro West's health partners.

A gently flowing waterfall, 1,000 tulips that bloom in the Spring, two caregiving cats and rabbits scampering out back add a dash of color, serenity and interest to the grounds of Pacific Gardens Care Center in Tigard.



Garden delight: The addition of a pond has been a welcome benefit for residents, employees and visitors at the Pacific Gardens Care Center. Administrator Tim White (pictured) said it's one of many improvements underway at the Tigard facility.

A longtime “partner in caring” with Metro West, the company serves the 9-1-1 needs of its residents as well as non-emergency medical transportation to and from the facility. Since 1966, Pacific Gardens has offered its residents and their families rehabilitation, skilled nursing, hospice and respite care services.

While the staff and administrators take their work very seriously, there's also a strong emphasis on fun and connecting residents with the beauty and serenity of nature, a good tool in rehabilitation. As

visitors make their way to the front door, the sound of falling water greets them. A pond features two creeks, goldfish and assorted plants and flowers.

The pond was the brainchild of administrator Tim White, who sketched out the design and led the construction effort. “Boy, you should have seen the crew,” said Tim, talking about the maintenance guys, department heads and residents who

pitched in to help. “It was a team effort,” said Tim, who manned the backhoe and clearly enjoyed the project.

Tim said the pond is a healing force for residents, their families and neighbors. “Residents and their families love to feed the fish. Sometimes it takes their minds off what's going on in other areas of their lives. It puts them in touch with memories of fishing trips that they went on as parents or as kids. We want our residents and guests to have a positive experience when they're here.”

As Tim describes the project, a visitor approaches. “Do you have a line in the water?” she asks jokingly. Indeed, plans for more water features are on the drawing board. “My vision for the facility is that everyone has access to or can hear the water,” said Tim, who has worked in the long-term care industry for 16 years.

While he has ambitious plans for the outside, the self-described “administrator and general contractor” has recently overseen an ambitious interior remodel. A brand new 24-bed short-term stay rehabilitation unit is projected to open by summer's end. This unit will feature some private suites, a private dining and recreational room, high-low electric beds, flat-screen TVs and garden. Each room will be designed to be “family friendly.”

The “family” includes two felines, Fluffy and Scratch, a brother-and-sister combo who have the run of the place and clearly enjoy attention from residents, staff and guests.

While the facility has a whole new look about it, Tim paid tribute to an ongoing benefit: staff members. “Our focus is making people feel they are part of the philosophy and vision of the facility. It's neat to see both residents and staff in tune with the environment.” To that end, Tim said the for-profit facility provides profit sharing to staff, a rarity in the nursing and rehab care industry.

He also lauded the connection to other community providers. “Metro West has always been there when we needed assistance,” said Tim. “While they're a partner in the business sense, it's also a friendship. They have a lot of trust and integrity.”

An open house at Pacific Gardens on Sept. 28 will feature food, beverages, entertainment, door prizes and more. Call 503-639-1144 for more details.

“Meeting Each Customer's Needs”



Forwarding and Address Correction Requested

Serving Washington County
Since 1953
5475 NE Dawson Creek Dr.
Hillsboro, OR 97124



Columbia County

continued from page 1

paramedic supervisor for the company, and the coordinator of Columbia County Rider.

In this case, “everything” means no change in Metro West’s role as a long-time and trusted medical transportation provider, a tradition in places such as Vernonia, St. Helens, Rainier, Clatskanie and Scappoose, said Heimuller. For 30 years, the company has offered some level of non-emergency ambulance service to residents of these communities, especially nursing home facilities.

Recently, Metro West started absorbing, through temporary contracts, portions of existing transportation systems that were begun by senior citizens agencies and councils.

Heimuller said both systems encountered funding and operation challenges and began to look for a private provider. County and state officials agreed that a single provider was the best route to follow. There was a competitive bid process and Metro West was the successful bidder to offer service to county residents.

While it’s too early in the service to have exact ridership numbers, Heimuller said one popular route operates during



All aboard: This colorfully illustrated bus is one of several vehicles serving the transportation needs of Columbia County commuters.

the day between St. Helens and Portland. One-way fare costs \$4. Seniors, disabled citizens and children can ride for \$3. In time, the company hopes to have a comprehensive transportation service in Columbia County.

Heimuller said services like the one in Columbia County is a good fit for Metro West.

“We have the infrastructure to accommodate other transportation needs other than 9-1-1 ambulance. We have drivers, a dispatch center and a maintenance shop.

“As Metro West evolves and grows, we’ll continue to look for other innovative ways of meeting the needs of our customers.”

For rates, services and other information regarding Columbia County Rider, call 1-888-462-6526.

“Meeting Each Customer’s Needs”