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PRESS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: City of Umatilla Welcomes New Parks and Recreation Staff

Umatilla, OR- AUGUST 07, 2024— The City of Umatilla is pleased to announce the appointment of Esmeralda Perches as the new Parks and Recreation Director, effective August 1, 2024. A longtime Umatilla resident with nearly a decade of public service experience, Esmeralda brings a deep commitment to Umatilla and a wealth of experience to the role. Her leadership promises to usher in an exciting new chapter for Umatilla's recreational offerings. Additionally, the City welcomes a new Parks and Recreation Manager and three new Parks and Recreation Coordinators.

Meet the New Parks and Rec Director

Born in Southern California and having relocated to Umatilla in 1994, now a long-time community member, Esmeralda quickly embraced Umatilla as home, captivated by its slower pace and tight-knit community. She holds a Bachelor's in Human Development and Family Sciences from Oregon State University and will pursue certification as a Certified Parks and Recreation Professional (CPRP). Her journey with the City of Umatilla started as an Accounts Payable/Building Permit Clerk. Over the years, she has worn many hats, including Community Development Coordinator, Recreation and Development Manager, Senior Accountant, and now Parks and Recreation Director. Her diverse roles, interpersonal relationships, keen ability to get things done, bilingual skills, and dedication reflect a deep commitment to both the city and its residents.

Her excitement for the role stems from the strong community bonds and the city's potential for growth. She is particularly eager to enhance parks and recreational opportunities, building on the Master Park Plan adopted in 2021, which includes community-driven program recommendations and facility improvements. She is excited to transition into the primary leadership role with city-sponsored events, especially the Rock the Locks Musical Festival Event, with last year being its inaugural year, a notable recent success with opportunities for continuous improvement.

Some of the current challenges include limited facilities, which constrain program offerings. To combat recent staff turnover and maintain department stability, Esmeralda aims to foster a positive work environment with career advancement opportunities, flexible hours, and informal recognition. The goal is to expand park facility offerings and to build upon a legacy of well-maintained, accessible parks and recreational facilities that enrich community life, promoting physical fitness, mental well-being, and community engagement.

She feels that success will be measured by program participation rates, community feedback, park usage, budget management, revenue generation, and positive media relations that highlight the department's impact.

Looking ahead, the new Parks and Rec Director plans to expand community events and programs while strengthening partnerships with local organizations. Ensuring inclusivity and accessibility in all offerings involves staff training, developing targeted outreach strategies, and regular community feedback.

Introducing the New Parks and Rec Manager

The City welcomes Luke Romero who is a proud resident of Umatilla. Luke is not only a dedicated community member but also one of the original members of the Parks and Recreation department, bringing invaluable institutional knowledge and passion to the team. He holds a Bachelor's in Organizational Communications from Idaho State University, an MBA from the University of Colorado, and has completed the National Recreation and Parks Association's Event Management School. Luke brings eight years of youth sports coaching and two years of ACA Level 2 kayak instructor experience and is currently pursuing certification as a Certified Parks and Recreation Professional (CPRP). Luke is highly committed to fostering community engagement through recreation.

Having lived in Umatilla for five years and served over two years as a Parks and Recreation Coordinator, he finds the community's diversity and potential most

inspiring. Umatilla's friendly environment, scenic parks, and outdoor activities attracted him to seek a role where he could enhance the community's quality of life and create memorable experiences. His background in supply chain logistics management and Parks and Recreation coordination equips him well for managing events, programming, budgeting, and fostering community collaboration. He plans to expand recreational programs, introduce a diverse portfolio of activities, and enhance community engagement through outreach and surveys, collaborations, and volunteerism. He values seeing the positive impact of programs and organizing community events such as Landing Days and Winterfest, blending his passion for recreation with strategic planning to propel departmental success.

Reflecting on his journey, he shares, "I want to extend my gratitude to the pioneers of Umatilla Parks and Recreation who came before me. Your unwavering dedication and exceptional hard work have laid a remarkable foundation for our parks and recreational programs. Your above-and-beyond efforts and steadfast commitment inspire me to continue building and enhancing our community's recreational experiences. Thank you for your invaluable contributions."

The Parks and Rec Department Welcomes 3 New Parks and Rec Coordinators

Joining them are three new Parks and Recreation Coordinators, Marla Martens, Kimberly Macias, and Carrie Holmes, each bringing unique skills and fresh perspectives to their roles. Their addition comes at a crucial time to a department, which has recently experienced significant turnover as previous staff pursue new career opportunities away from the city.

Kimberly Macias: Kimberly, a local resident who grew up in the area, is passionate about adventure and teamwork, qualities she brings into her new role as Parks and Recreation Coordinator. Her background includes being actively involved in sports, which has honed her teamwork and leadership skills. Additionally, her experience as an instructional assistant for K-5 students has equipped her with a strong ability to engage and inspire diverse groups. Kimberly graduated from Hermiston High School in 2010 and went on to Eastern Washington University, where she majored in Marketing. Outside of her professional responsibilities, she enjoys exploring national parks, watching sports, and spending quality time with her family. Enthusiastic about tackling challenges and creating impactful results, Kimberly looks forward to contributing to outstanding programs and events for the community.

Carrie Holmes: Carrie, known to many as Ms. Carrie, has spent the last three years working as a paraprofessional at McNary Heights Elementary, and she also serves as the local Little League representative. With a year of experience

as a Rec Aide, Carrie eagerly applied for the Parks and Recreation Coordinator role. A long-time Umatilla resident, Carrie enjoys camping, attending concerts, and collecting comic books with her husband, Andy, and their two sons. Halloween is her favorite holiday, and she is excited to be involved in organizing engaging community events.

Marla Martens: Marla, originally from the East Coast, has lived in the Tri-Cities for 18 years. With over 25 years in business, dance, and choreography, she has collaborated with sports teams and famous artists and was a collegiate cheerleader. Married to Matt, a veteran firefighter, they have four children. The family also includes two cats and a dog. Marla looks forward to her new role and working with a talented team.

Dave Stockdale, City Manager, said of the new Parks team "We are exceptionally excited to welcome our new overwhelmingly talented and experienced Parks & Recreation staff! As our community grows, so does our need to meet our residents' expectations of quality-of-life services provided, especially from our Parks offerings. Our new team brings more than 50 years of combined community-engagement experience and local community relationships. It is an exciting time for Umatilla and our new Parks team has all the skills, experience, local knowledge, education, and relationships to realize immediate success!"

Though Parks programs were offered on a limited basis for years, the City's Parks and Recreation Department was officially established in June 2022 and has rapidly evolved from its volunteer-based roots to what it is now. The department will now fully be staffed with a director, a manager, and 3 coordinators, as well as our other staff at the Marina & RV Park, Big River Golf Course, and in partnership with Public Works for facilities maintenance. Please join the City in welcoming the new Parks and Recreation Department staff as they begin their roles with the City of Umatilla.

Umatilla Parks and Recreation

The city of Umatilla Parks and Recreation Department strives to provide high quality, affordable, diverse recreational opportunities that are accessible to all residents of Umatilla. Additionally, they seek to provide public spaces and services that promote community connections and healthy lifestyles.

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