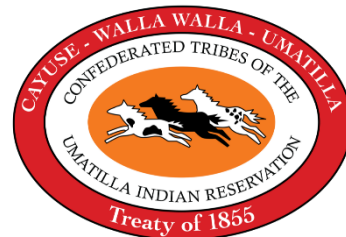


# Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation PRESS RELEASE



46411 Timíne Way  
Pendleton, OR 97801  
541-276-3165 • CTUIR.org

---

October 1, 2025

Contact: Travis Snell • 541.429.7394 • travissnell@ctuir.org

## 2 UTPD Officers Receive Commendations for Life- saving Actions

MISSION – Two Umatilla Tribal Police Department (UTPD) officers recently received commendations for actions they took that helped saved two lives in separate incidents.

Officer Ryan Bernards received a commendation for his life-saving actions during Pendleton Round-Up. According to a UTPD commendation, while patrolling the Teepee Village on Sept. 13, a group of children approached Bernards informing him of an infant choking inside the village.

Bernards followed the children to the infant and performed a “finger sweep” to dislodge the object on which the infant was choking. Once the infant began breathing again, Bernards stayed on scene until medical personnel arrived. The infant was then transported to CHI St. Anthony Hospital for evaluation.

“This is a great example of the work police officers do daily and shows the dedication and competency of Officer Bernards to the service and safety of the public,” the commendation states.

Bernards, who joined the UTPD on Aug. 18 after 10 years with the La Grande Police Department, said his actions were “appropriate to the situation” and that he doesn’t seek praise. Although he said it was nice to be recognized, what he found impressive were the children who sought him for help.

“They provided only the needed information and led me to the infant,” he said. “Once it was obvious the child was receiving oxygen, I gave the child back to the mother and we monitored the child until the paramedics arrived. I do believe the child is perfectly fine, but I did not have any more contact after the paramedics took over and they were in the ambulance with the child.”

Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation members annually host the Teepee Village during Round-Up, which normally includes more than 300 teepees set up by Native Americans from around the Pacific Northwest.

Officer Paul Heimbach, who has been with the UTPD for five years, received his commendation for helping resuscitate an elderly man on Sept. 21.

According to Heimbach's commendation, during a call to assist Oregon State Police (OSP) for a single-vehicle crash on Interstate 84 near mile post 224, Heimbach arrived first to find an elderly adult male unresponsive in the driver's seat.

Recognizing the man needed care, Heimbach removed the driver and performed CPR for 10 minutes while waiting on OSP and an ambulance to arrive. Once paramedics assumed care of the driver, Heimbach assisted with the landing of LifeFlight to transport the driver via helicopter to the hospital.

"My thoughts on helping the driver were that I would do everything I could to help the man until either more help arrived, or I was physically unable to continue," he said. "The public depends on police and fire to come to their aid in their time of need. To give up prematurely or not give every available ounce of effort would be letting down the public, and that was not an option."

*The Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation is comprised of the Cayuse, Walla Walla and Umatilla Tribes, and formed under the Treaty of 1855 at the Walla Walla Valley, 12 Stat. 945. In 1949, the Tribes adopted a constitutional form of government to protect, preserve and enhance the reserved treaty rights guaranteed under federal law.*

###