

HERMISTON

Students get down and dirty during homecoming week

By SEAN HART
East Oregonian

After a week of dressing up in outfits such as '50s attire and togas, Hermiston high schoolers donned their mud gear for a homecoming tug-of-war battle at the Farm-City Pro Rodeo grounds.

In the end, Team Harshberger, comprised of members of the boys soccer team, was the last left standing on dry ground. Senior John Mejia from the team said their cohesiveness propelled them to victory.

"We worked together, and we did a 1-2-3-pull," he said. "We were pretty focused on getting them tired after we pulled and keeping it going after that."

Mejia said the best part of the homecoming festivities was having more fans than usual at the home soccer game against Hood River Valley Tuesday. With the added cheering section, the Bulldogs played to a 2-2 draw with the defending 5A state champions.

Another senior, Victoria Montez, said homecoming week was fun.

"I think it's really cool looking at everybody being so creative with everything: the dress-ups and the time that people put into their outfits and the games they



Staff photo by Sean Hart

Hermiston High School students compete in a tug-of-war Thursday at the Farm-City Pro Rodeo grounds.

came up with," she said. "This year, they actually involved a lot of people in everything, which was pretty cool."

Junior Payton Staker said the week was interesting. He enjoyed the '50s-themed dress-up day.

Freshman Madi Botti said she dressed up all week. She said she was excited for Friday's football game against Hood River Valley.

"I'm going to be out there cheering," she said. "We're going to win. Go Hermiston!"



Staff photo by Sean Hart

Hermiston High School students compete in a tug-of-war Thursday as part of Homecoming festivities.

HERMISTON

Free health insurance enrollment help available

Open enrollment is Nov. 1 to Jan. 31

By JADE MCDOWELL
East Oregonian

When open enrollment for the Oregon Health Insurance Marketplace opens on Nov. 1 Hermiston will be one of 15 communities in Oregon with a free enrollment center to help people sign up.

Simmons Insurance Group at 702 E. Main St. was selected by the state as a "drop-in center" and given a grant to provide free one-on-one help for people shopping for health insurance, enrolling in health plans or looking for financial aid through HealthCare.gov. The business will also help people sign up for the Oregon Health Plan.

Josh Goller of Simmons Insurance Group said in an email that compared to the rest of the state, Umatilla County has a particularly high number of people who are eligible for financial help with their insurance costs but are not taking advantage of it. Three out of every four Oregonians who signed up for insurance through HealthCare.gov qualified for financial assistance.

Goller said coming in for free professional assistance can help people find the best plan for them.

"While price is certainly an important consideration, it is important to look beyond price to be sure the plan will provide appropriate financial security for a family," he said.

Goller said the grant will allow Simmons Insurance Group to offer extended hours on some evenings and weekends, and potentially hire more staff during the enrollment period.

Open enrollment for 2015 is from Nov. 1 to Jan. 31. After the enrollment period is over anyone wishing to purchase health insurance through the government health insurance marketplace will have to wait another year and could pay a penalty on their 2016 taxes.

Anyone who wants help navigating the health insurance website can walk in to Simmons insurance Monday through Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. or call 541-567-6367 to make an appointment. Evening and weekend help is available on an appointment basis.

Those who want to enroll without help or shop for a better plan than the one they already have can visit HealthCare.gov or find Oregon-specific information at OregonHealthCare.gov.

Contact Jade McDowell at jmcdowell@eastoregonian.com or 541-564-4536.

Livable Hermiston Committee looking for feedback

HERMISTON — The city of Hermiston is looking for feedback on increasing the community's livability factor.

A four-question survey on will be online at www.surveymonkey.com/r/livablehermiston and on the city's website until Nov. 12. One question asks survey-takers to imagine Hermiston was given a \$1 million gift to enhance the city's livability and asks what residents' top spending priority would be.

The answers, collected and analyzed by an independent consultant, will be shared with the city's new Livable Hermiston Committee.

According to a city news release the committee came about because community members often come to the city with ideas for adding assets to the community, ranging from an indoor swimming pool to a museum.

"The common thread among all of these requests is that they all would be great assets which help improve the quality of life and livability of the community, but they also require an immense amount of resources and community support," the release states. "That's why the city of Hermiston is engaging residents to find out exactly what existing assets could be enhanced, and what missing assets truly have enough broad-based community support to be able to become viable projects for the community to strive for over the next five to 10 years."

Survey participants are eligible for a drawing for a \$25 gift card.

Few attend first Hermiston school facility forum

HERMISTON — No Hermiston resident who does not work for the school district — or the media — attended the first facility forum Thursday about capacity needs and a possible bond effort in May 2017.

Administrators showed a slide show available on the facilities planning section of the district website, hermiston.k12.or.us.

Deputy Superintendent Wade Smith said

student growth, aging infrastructure and safety and security risks have led to the need for additional capital funding.

He said the facilities master planning committee identified \$131 million in need, and a citizens review committee has been created to make a recommendation to the school board early next year.

The members of the citizens review committee are Dennis Barnett, Greg Juul, Benny Medelez, Jeff Snell, Joe Thompson, Blaine Hendrickson, Eddie De La Cruz, Dave Drotzmann, Phil Hamm, Angela Pursel, Tiah Devin, Dave Rademacher, Bob Barton, Sally Anderson-Hansell, school board members Ginny Holthus and Dave Smith and Wade Smith as the district liaison.

At the school board work session at 6:30 p.m. Monday at Sandstone Middle School, Smith said the board will discuss the possibility of procuring an additional four to six modular classrooms in order to provide capacity for next school year.

Umatilla County, BMCC announce partnership

PENDLETON — The Umatilla County Board of Commissioners voted Wednesday to join Blue Mountain Community College in developing a skilled workforce in the area.

The partnership will include working with Susan Bower, owner of Eastern Oregon Business Source, to conduct a thorough study

BRIEFLY

of workforce needs in the area.

Commissioner Bill Elfering said in a news release that the need for skilled workers is second only to the need for more housing in Umatilla County.

"The demand for skilled workforce and skilled workforce training is a high priority in the private sector," Elfering said. "We believe the county and BMCC can help fill that niche, which will lead to business expansion and recruitment for family wage jobs."

According to the release, Elfering has been meeting with industry leaders and state and local officials on the topic.

Commissioner George Murdock said there are already excellent programs to increase workforce development, including recent efforts by BMCC to add programs to strengthen public sector leadership and customer service. He said the county wasn't interested in duplicating those efforts, but rather finding ways to help local employers have a selection of skilled workers to hire for hard-to-fill positions.

Anyone interested in providing industry information for the study can contact Bower at 541-215-9252.

Helix wins first Knowledge Bowl of the season

STANFIELD — High school students from Helix beat teams from Hermiston, Heppner, Echo, Umatilla and Stanfield at the first Knowledge Bowl of the season at Stanfield Secondary School Wednesday.

After three rounds of 50 questions each, teams from Helix and Stanfield were in the top two spots. Teams from Echo and Umatilla were tied for third, with Umatilla earning a berth in the final round after a 10-question playoff.

After a four-year hiatus, Heppner returned to the competition this year, and Milton-Freewater may join for the first time at the next meet in Helix Nov. 4. Additional competitions are planned in Umatilla, Hermiston and Echo.

Wildhorse hosts event planning seminar

MISSION — A special workshop on event planning is offered at Wildhorse Resort & Casino.

Ingalls and Associates will discuss planning, sponsorship development and event marketing that is appropriate for festivals, fairs and other events. The presenters have been producing and managing events for more than 25 years — from wine festivals to fairs and Oregon's largest agriculture exposition.

The seminar is Wednesday, Oct. 28 from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. in Wildhorse's Tucannon Room, located off Highway 331, Mission. The cost is \$25.

For more information or to register, contact the Pendleton Chamber of Commerce at 541-276-7411, info@pendletonchamber.com or visit www.pendletonchamber.com.



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OR Join us at Good Shepherd Medical Center Hermiston Pharmacy

Pick up begins at 8:30 AM
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**In addition to our FREE Shuttle Service, Umatilla Cab Co. will be offering a preferred rate of \$5 each way (\$2 per additional rider) to and from the event! Call direct for a ride @ 541-567-6055

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Honoring those who have served and those that are currently serving our country!

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For more information, call Paula at 1-800-522-0255 or Hermiston Herald at 541-564-4530.

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