

IRS scam returns

East Oregonian

Do not fall for phone callers claiming to be agents with the Internal Revenue Service. The old scam is again hitting the local area.

Umatilla County assessment and taxation director Paul Chalmers said his office has fielded a ton of calls from folks who reported an IRS agent told them they owed property tax and to send cash. Pendleton and Hermiston police and the Umatilla County Sheriff's Office also reported taking calls Monday with similar reports.

"We're letting them know it's a scam," Chalmers said.

He also dialed up one of the numbers in the con — 406-924-9644 — and a male answered who claimed to be an IRS agent, who asked Chalmers for his address and phone number. Chalmers said he could hear others in the background having similar

conversations and asked the fake agent how much it would cost to clear up the non-existent problem. The swindler wanted \$9,800.

Chalmers said his next call was to the FBI.

The IRS in late 2015 urged the public to be aware of the scam and stated it will not call you to demand immediate payment nor call you if you owe taxes without first sending you a bill in the mail. The IRS also will not threaten to bring in law enforcement to arrest or deport you, or take away your driver's license.

The federal revenue service recommended calling 800-366-4484 to report these scams to the Treasury Inspector General for Tax Administration, or visit www.treasury.gov/tigta/contact_report_scam.shtml. You also can contact the Federal Trade Commission at FTC.gov and use the "FTC Complaint Assistant," and please add "IRS Telephone Scam" in the notes.

HERMISTON



Staff photo by Tammy Malgesini

Debbie Cissna learns the rumba from Collin Palian of the Utah Ballroom Dance Company Monday in the auditorium at Hermiston High School. Cissna and five other Hermiston "stars" will compete Saturday during Dancing with the Hermiston Stars.

Local stars tango (and more) for charities

East Oregonian

A handful of Hermiston "stars" have been learning dance moves while preparing to complete and raise money for local charities.

Presented by Desert Arts Council, the third season of Dancing with the Hermiston Stars features Dan Briscoe, Debbie Cissna, Blaine Ganvoa, Cam Preus, Jesus (Chuy) Rome and Shannon Snyder. The local residents met their partners with the Utah Ballroom Dance Company Monday and began taking their first steps on the dance floor.

Dancing with the Hermiston Stars is Saturday at 7 p.m. in the Hermiston High School auditorium, 600 S. First St. Tickets purchased in advance are \$35 for adults and \$17.50 for those under 18. Admission at the door is an additional \$5.

In addition to competing for the coveted mirror ball trophy, the local dancers will raise money for their chosen charities. The nonprofit organizations include Vange John Memo-

rial Hospice (Briscoe), Pregnancy Care Services (Cissna), Martha's House (Ganvoa), the Blue Mountain Community College Foundation (Preus), Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) program (Rome) and Made to Thrive (Snyder).

Between the judges and an interactive audience, a winner will be announced at the end of the show. Also, people can make donations at www.desertartscouncil.com/event/21 on behalf of their favorite star — each dollar counts as one vote. Money will go to the dancer's selected charity.

Local children will open the show and dance during intermission with choreography by the professional troupe. The second half of the evening features a performance by members of the Utah Ballroom Dance Company.

Tickets are available at www.desertartscouncil.com, the Hermiston Chamber of Commerce at 541-567-6151 and Hermiston Parks & Recreation, 180 N.E. Second St.

Drunk driving crackdown nets 29 warning, citations, no arrests

East Oregonian

Umatilla County sheriff's deputies warned or cited 29 drivers last month during an overtime shift crackdown on impaired drivers, but made no arrests.

The "high visibility enforcement event" to catch driver under the influence of intoxicants ran from Dec. 11 through New Year's Day, according to a written statement from the sheriff's office. A grant from the Oregon State Sheriff's Association covered the cost of the shifts.

The sheriff's office, though, responded to six crashes during standard patrol hours. A victim in

one crash suffered minor injuries, according to the sheriff's office, and the other wrecks were injury-free. One non-injury crash led to the arrest of a man for DUI, but the sheriff's office did not identify the man.

The extra patrols were part of a nationwide event to get more impaired drivers off the roads, the sheriff's office stated, and the next DUI crackdown will be on Feb. 7, Super Bowl Sunday.

HERMISTON Cabin Fever creates winter fun

By TAMMY MALGESINI
East Oregonian

Things are heating up as John Wambeke & Friends ward away the chill of winter with the upcoming Cabin Fever Concert.

Wambeke, who has a window washing business, ponders the lineup and antics for the annual show while whistling away at work. In its eighth year, Wambeke said the concert is sort of a cross between "Hee Haw" and "The Carol Burnett Show."

"It reminds people of the good ol' days," he said. "It's very homespun in the humor."

The Dutch oven dinner show features a hearty beef stroganoff meal catered by Sharon's Sweet Treats. It also includes a scrumptious, mouth-watering cobbler, Wambeke said. With seating for 400, Wambeke said only about 60 tickets remain.

The event is Saturday, Jan. 16 at 6 p.m. at the Hermiston Conference Center, 415 S. Highway 395. Tickets are \$38 and are available by calling Cottage Flowers at 541-567-4305 or stopping by at 1725 N. First St., Hermiston.

Leading the laughs is Pat Ward, who prides himself on getting into character, including as Eunice. This episode of Thelma and Eunice, played by Wambeke and Ward, finds the "sweet" old spinsters of the Dibble Parrish hitting the road. Eunice is taking her first driving lessons, finally being able to squeeze behind the steering wheel as gravity has shifted her anatomy around.

Ward will get in touch with his feminine side again as Lefty's mom is introduced to the audience. Pete and Lefty were characters created for advertising the show.

Described as "a delightful mixture of music and humor," Ward said people don't want to miss all the talented musicians taking the stage.

"I enjoy the music side of it," he said.



Courtesy of Lukes Photos

John Wambeke and Pat Ward are the masterminds behind the annual Cabin Fever Concert. Only 60 tickets remain for the Jan. 16 Dutch oven dinner event.

"The musicians are fantastic and they really know their craft."

Among the talented musicians, Ward said, is Frazer Wambeke. The 2004 Hermiston High School graduate — oldest son of John and Jordawn Wambeke — was raised in a musical family. Also a graduate of Columbia Basin College in Pasco, Wambeke performs several gigs a week, including with the Frazer Wambeke Trio, which includes Frazer Wambeke (piano/guitar/vocals), Juan Hernandez (bass) and Derek Munson (drums).

Other familiar faces include Eric Jepsen, Joe Lindsay and Cory Cooley. In addition, Wambeke raves about a pair of special guests with Abbi Hernandez of the Tri-Cities and Jimmy Creason of Irrigon.

After seeing Hernandez, 11, performing at a winery last spring, Wambeke contacted her family to make

arrangements to bring her to Hermiston for the show. With a "mean version" of Taylor Swift, Wambeke said she has "American Idol" potential. Creason, 19, has taken a number of lessons, yet Wambeke calls him a self-styled guitar player.

"Plus, he can sing 'Marie Laveau' like you wouldn't believe," Wambeke added.

And, if you're familiar with the Cabin Fever Concert, you know the show is full of explosive surprises.

"We figured out something new to explode. With a new cannon, no one is going to figure this one out," Wambeke said with a mischievous laugh.

For more information about the Jan. 16 concert and dinner show, search Facebook for "Cabin Fever Concert."

Contact Community Editor Tammy Malgesini at tmalgesini@eastoregonian.com or 541-564-4539

UMATILLA

Council approves purchase of gas station property

By JADE MCDOWELL
East Oregonian

The City of Umatilla is one step closer to its vision of a park in the heart of downtown after councilors approved a land purchase agreement Tuesday night.

City Manager Bob Ward said the old gas station property on Sixth Street is "just another piece in the puzzle" in putting together the ultimate vision of a sprawling city park across from the city offices and public library.

"There would be green space from here to the Old Town Site," he said.

The city already owns two adjacent parcels and would like to eventually purchase one or two more.

"It will be a long time before we get there but this was an opportunity we couldn't pass up," he said.

The agreement is for the city to purchase the property for \$87,280 barring any major cost-prohibitive environmental issues that crop up with the gas station building. The property's underground fuel storage tanks have already been removed and

the soil remediated.

Councilor David Lougee said he supported the overall vision, but worried about the city buying up three quarters of the block and then letting some of the land lie unused for an extended period of time while it sought funding for the project. In the end, however, councilors voted unanimously to authorize the purchase agreement.

The council was expected to approve new contracts for Ward and public works director Russ Pelleberg, in addition to a new pay scale for department heads, on Tuesday but Ward said Pelleberg's contract was still under negotiation and recommended the entire package of changes be considered at the council's next meeting on Feb. 2.

Ward's current contract runs out Feb. 1, 2017 but the council voted in October to end Ward's contract early in favor of Pelleberg becoming city manager on March 1. Ward will stay on in a transitional capacity until July 1, at which point the plan approved by the council states the city will buy out the

rest of his contract.

Pelleberg would continue to serve as public works director in addition to his city manager duties, necessitating a change in pay scale for some administrators as they took on additional responsibilities formerly under the city manager umbrella.

Ward told the council that he didn't believe the Feb. 2 meeting needed to include an executive session to discuss details within the final versions of the contracts, since the contracts will become public record after being approved by the council.

During Tuesday's meeting a recommendation by the city's transient room tax committee sparked a discussion about the role of the Umatilla Chamber of Commerce.

The council was asked to approve a grant of \$2,600 to the chamber to support operations and \$7,000 to the Umatilla Museum for repairs to its building.

Councilor Mary Dedrick said the chamber's focus seemed to be solely on tourism and not on attracting

new businesses to town. If the chamber was going to ask for money, she said, she would like to see staff members actively working to recruit businesses to town.

"I always hear, 'Nothing is being done about bringing in business,'" Dedrick said. "I think that should be your first order of business."

Chamber director Karen Hutchinson-Talaski said she understood Dedrick's concerns and said the chamber does extend itself beyond a tourism focus by promoting local businesses and providing workshops, newsletters and other supports to chamber members. As for writing letters to companies asking them to consider expanding into Umatilla, she said, she felt that was outside of her area of expertise but she would love to partner with the city on those types of efforts.

"I agree with you there should be more of that," she said.

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

BRIEFLY

School canceled Wednesday in west Umatilla, Morrow counties

HERMISTON — Freezing rain shut down or delayed school in many local districts Wednesday.

Hermiston, Umatilla, Stanfield, Boardman, Heppner, Irrigon and Ione canceled classes for the day, while Milton-Freewater, Echo and the Blue Mountain Community College campus in Milton-Freewater started two hours late.

Ag safety seminars set for Hermiston

HERMISTON — SAIF Corporation, Oregon's

nonprofit state-chartered workers' compensation insurance company, will hold a pair of agriculture safety seminars Jan. 12-13 in Hermiston.

The meeting Tuesday, Jan. 12 will be presented in English, and the meeting Wednesday, Jan. 13 will be presented in Spanish. Seminars will run from 9:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. at the Hermiston Conference Center, 415 S. Highway 395.

Work-related injuries cost U.S. agriculture \$8.3 billion

every year, according to SAIF. Other losses include broken machinery, hiring and retraining employees and reduced production due to the disruption.

Topics for the seminars will include: dealing with workplace hazards, building a safety culture, policies to handle drugs and alcohol, updates from Oregon OSHA and continuing education.

Early registration is required for the seminars. To register, visit www.saif.com/agseminar or call 1-800-285-8525.

Agape House hosts indoor sale

HERMISTON — Clothing, knick-knacks and furniture are among the items available during an indoor sale at the Agape House.

Clothes are three items for \$1, furniture is as marked and knick-knacks are you name the price. The sale is Saturday from 8:30-11 a.m. at 500 Harper Road, Hermiston. Donations are accepted through Friday.

For more information, call 541-567-8774.

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