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HERMISTON

Famous watermelons hit the market



Staff photo by E.J. Harris
Hermiston watermelons are out of the fields on display at the Finley's Fresh Produce booth Friday at the Pendleton Farmer's Market.

By GEORGE PLAVER
East Oregonian

They're here!
Hermiston watermelons, savored by Oregonians for their distinctive sweetness, are back in season. Growers began harvesting earlier this week, and Finley's Fresh Produce of Hermiston was the first to arrive with melons in tow at the Pendleton Farmer's Market on Friday.
"I tried them yesterday. They're so sweet and good," said Naomi Sanchez, who owns Finley's Fresh Produce with her husband, Ildefonso Zuniga. "We plan on selling out."
While early season watermelons might be a little smaller than average, Sanchez said the quality remains consistent. She

credits Zuniga for knowing when they're ripe for the picking.
"I don't know how, but he always picks them when they're perfect," she said.
Hermiston watermelons have earned their reputation thanks to the Columbia Basin's unique combination of climate and soil. Watermelons themselves are desert plants, which take in heat during the day to produce sugar as a source of energy. Not only are the days hot enough for melons around Hermiston, but cooler nights slow down the respiration process which allows the plants to retain all that sugar. Light, sandy soils also allow water to filter down deep to plant's roots. The result is a sweet and juicy summertime treat.
Jack Bellinger, of Bellinger Farms

in Hermiston, said they started cutting melons off the vine earlier this week, which are now available at their bistro on South Highway 395 and local produce stands. He said they'll start shipping to stores across the Northwest later next week, including the Portland and Seattle metro areas.
The growing season this year has been hit and miss, Bellinger said, with some weeks topping out around 65 degrees and others reaching triple-digits. That type of variation can interrupt watermelons while they're growing, but he anticipates the crop will fare well over the next couple months.
"The quality looks really good," Bellinger said. "We're cutting really solid watermelons right now."

BADGE OF MOURNING

Hermiston officers honor Dallas police

By ALEXA LOUGEE
East Oregonian

The Hermiston Police Department is among many across the country that will show support for their brothers and sisters in blue by wearing black bands on their badges, honoring the five officers killed Thursday night in Dallas, Texas.
"Mourning badges have a long history," Hermiston Police Captain and acting Chief Darryl Johnson said Friday. "Law enforcement officers wear these bands out of respect and to honor the memory of a fallen officer."
"Each agency will have their own guidelines. Given the gravity of the situation in Dallas and the tragedy of officers being ambushed and slain we chose to honor these officers and this tradition."
The Oregon State Sher-



Staff photo by E.J. Harris
Hermiston Police officers are donning a black band with a blue line through it over their badges in honor of the Dallas Police officers that were killed and injured Thursday at a rally in Dallas.

In the line of duty

A look at three of the officers killed in Dallas

The Associated Press

One slain officer was a newlywed. Another had survived multiple tours in Iraq, only to be killed back home in the U.S.
The stories of those killed in a sniper attack in Dallas during a protest over recent police shootings of black men emerged

Friday as their identities became known. Authorities say five officers were killed and seven others wounded in the deadliest day for U.S. law enforcement since the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks. Two civilians also were shot.

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More inside

- Dallas suspect amassed personal arsenal at home
- Killer robot used by Dallas police opens ethical debate
- Woman who was shot at protest shielded four sons

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HERMISTON

Solar farm one step closer to depot land

By JADE MCDOWELL
East Oregonian

The Columbia Development Authority still does not have the Umatilla Chemical Depot land in its possession, but with permission from the Army it gave a green light to more than \$1 million per year in subleases with three solar companies Friday.
The board approved a project by OneEnergy Renewables, with a \$92,625 per year lease price, outright. They said they would support two other subleases — one with NextEra Energy for \$358,353 and one with SunPower for \$563,313 — as long as the companies agreed to a satisfactory plan for mitigating the impacts on burrowing owls living on the respective sites. The area covers about 900 acres.
Smith told the board that the companies were aware of the burrowing owl issue and had expected to take on the responsibility and cost of moving the man-made burrows that dot the properties.
He also said the companies did not plan to ask for enterprise zone or red zone tax breaks, so the projects would generate revenue for Umatilla County.
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GOOD MORNING TO
DICK HOPPER
OF PENDLETON

Enjoy a free pass to the Heritage Station Museum in Pendleton

HERITAGE STATION
The Umatilla County Historical Society Museum

Exploring the world beyond Pendleton

Graduate sets sights on public health

By ANTONIO SIERRA
East Oregonian

Before Cece Hoffman considers a return home, she wants to see the world.
The Pendleton High School graduate will major in public health at the University of Washington in the fall, with the intent of using her degree to work for a global health organization like the Red Cross.
While she has a broad range of roles she could fill in such an organization, what appeals to her is the prospect of offering aid to rural communities across the world.

PROMISE & POTENTIAL

"I like to travel and help others and I think of that as being a great thing to do," she said.
A member of the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, Hoffman said many of the young tribal members she knows plan to take similar paths, leaving the reservation to explore different parts of the country and world.
That doesn't mean Hoffman

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Staff photo by E.J. Harris
Pendleton High School graduate Cece Hoffman will attend the University of Washington in the fall.



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