

Fair manager enters at time of transition



EO file photo

Don Slone, the new manager of the Umatilla County Fair, addresses the crowd during the fair sponsors appreciation dinner Saturday night at Thompson Hall.

After managing the Harney County Fair for more than 25 years, Burns native Don Slone said he felt it was time to seek out a new challenge.

He found Umatilla County, and in January was selected by the fair board to replace retiring Peggy Anderson as the fair transitions from its longtime home in downtown Hermiston to its new location at the Eastern Oregon Trade and Event Center.

The idea of helping move the fair is an exciting one, Slone said.

“It’s going to be probably the biggest challenge I’ve encountered in my life,” he told the *East Oregonian* in January.

His credentials suggest it’s a challenge he will embrace. In the January conference for the Western Fair Association — which includes 11 states and Canada — Slone was made the association’s 2016 treasurer, with the understanding that he will serve as vice president of the association in 2017 and president in 2018.

Slone is also serving as the president of the Oregon Fairs Association for the second time. He said that position has given him the opportunity to work with all three Umatilla County commissioners

and a variety of fair board members in the year leading up to his hiring in the county.

He has been active in the Burns sports community over his career, coaching baseball and softball and playing in an over-30 Harney County basketball league. During his college career at Eastern Oregon State College (now Eastern Oregon University) from 1971-1973 he played basketball, baseball and soccer. He served as president of the 4-H Leaders Association and was a Parks and Recreation committee member for six years.

He said he appreciates that the Umatilla County Fair has kept its focus on agriculture while other fairs have drifted from that mission. He also likes the way the Farm-City Pro Rodeo complements the fair. Slone said he loves attending other county fairs in his free time, because there is always something to learn.

“I’m not only a person who works at a fair, but I am a fan of other fairs,” he said.

The new fairgrounds at EOTEC are under construction, with an expected completion date before the 2017 fair and rodeo.



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