

HERMISTON

Festival marks start of holiday season

By **TAMMY MALGESINI**
East Oregonian

What has become the unofficial kickoff to the holiday season, the Hermiston Festival of Trees is just around the corner.

A Whimsical Christmas features wine tasting, a no-host bar, dinner and a silent and live auction. People can bid on a dozen large trees, which come with a bounty of gifts, as well as 12 small trees and 12 themed baskets. Also, a silent auction includes 13 wreaths and 10 stockings. The event is Saturday, Dec. 3 beginning at 6 p.m. at the Hermiston Conference Center, 415 S. Highway 395. Tickets are \$35 each.

"It's become sort of the marquee event for the holiday," said John Spomer of the Hermiston Breakfast Kiwanis Club. "We almost have to turn people away."

The Family Day offers a variety of activities and the trees remain for viewing. A fundraiser for the Soroptimist International of the Greater Hermiston, there is a suggested donation of \$5 per family. However, Sally Peatow, president-elect, said no one will be turned away.

The Family Day is Sunday, Dec. 4 from noon to 4 p.m., also at the conference center. The Soroptimists took over coordinating the event a handful of years ago. Peatow said it helps in bringing attention to the club, which works to improve the lives of women and girls. Money raised from



File photo

Community members socialize and look at decorated Christmas trees during a past Hermiston Festival of Trees. This year's event is Saturday, Dec. 3 at the Hermiston Conference Center. The Family Day is Sunday, Dec. 4.

the event help fund scholarships for women in need. In addition, it's just a fun holiday event, she said.

Kids can participate in everything from decorating cookies and making ornaments and spin art to mini-manicures and tattoos to having photos taken with Santa. Also, stage entertainment helps set the holiday mood.

"Kids can make things they can give to grandma," Peatow said. "Also, it's an opportunity for the community to enjoy the holiday season together as a family."

Money raised from the gala event is split between the Kiwanis Club and the

Good Shepherd Community Health Foundation. Both organizations give back to the community through programs, donations and scholarships.

Among the themes of the majestically decorated trees are "A Merry Muggle Christmas," "Winter Wonderland" and "Starry Starry Night." Basket themes include "Sweet Treats," "A Holiday Feast," "Chute 8" and "Cabin Christmas."

"I think some people have a lot of fun," Spomer said. "It gives them a chance to be creative."

In addition to the auction, there is a raffle tree. Tickets

for it are \$10 each. Money raised from it will go to a city of Hermiston art enhancement project at the old Hermiston Union High School arch, which is located at 199 E. Ridgeway Ave.

Tickets for the auction/dinner can be purchased at the Hermiston Conference Center. Those unable to buy tickets are welcome to come for the auction to bid on items. For more information, visit www.facebook.com/hermistonfestivaloftrees.

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PENDLETON

Rape case grows to five victims

By **PHIL WRIGHT**
East Oregonian

Cole James Pryor, 18, of Pendleton, faces one charge for raping a 12-year-old girl. Pendleton Police Chief Stuart Roberts said that may be only the beginning.

"It looks like in total there are five girls," Roberts said, who range in age 11-14, with some crimes occurring more than a year ago.

Roberts said the initial case led police investigators to search social media and cellphones for clues. They found 36,000 communications, including messages and images.

"That evidence really allows us to progress these investigations," he said.

Detective Howard Bowen is working the cases and has one more victim to interview. Pendleton police will send all the reports to the Umatilla County District Attorney's Office to consider charges. Roberts said in some of the cases Jessica's Law for Oregon could apply, which mandates a minimum 25-year prison term for offenders guilty of sex crimes against a

child under 12.

Roberts said Pryor met some of his victims through their older sisters and others through social media, and as with most sexual predators, he "groomed" the girls so he could commit the crimes.

Police and sexual assault victims organizations describe grooming as the process a predator uses to gain a victim's trust, even affection, and to manipulate the victim to allow crimes to occur. Grooming also helps the offender avoid discovery. Predators also groom parents and guardians to gain access to victims.

Investigating these types of sexual crimes is challenging, Roberts said. Victims don't want their parents or guardians to know what happened, and they often care about the offender and don't want him in trouble. And, he added, the victims also feel a certain amount of embarrassment. Police often have to confront the victims with evidence, such as text messages or photos, before they open up with details about what happened



Pryor

BRIEFLY

Hermiston sophomore dies from alcohol consumption

HERMISTON — A Hermiston High School student died Sunday afternoon from a possible alcohol overdose.

The Hermiston School District reported Cesar Roque, 15, was a sophomore and played soccer for the high school. A written statement from the district called the death "tragic" and stated "our thoughts and prayers go out to all affected by this tragedy."



Roque

The district also stated it will provide support for staff and students during this difficult time on Monday at Hermiston High School and Armand Larive Middle School.

Hermiston Police Chief Jason Edmiston said there is an ongoing investigation into who provided the alcohol to Roque, who was a minor.

He said there was not yet a medical ruling on whether Roque had died from alcohol poisoning, asphyxiation or some other cause, but alcohol appeared to be a prime factor.

Pendleton building official John Lindstrom resigns

PENDLETON — For the second time this year, a supervisor in one of Pendleton's community development departments has resigned suddenly.

Building official John Lindstrom resigned from his position Friday, according to an email from city attorney Nancy Kerns.

Kerns wrote that the city wished Lindstrom well, but would not comment further on his departure.

Lindstrom had been on paid leave, and although Kerns declined to state when his leave of absence began, he gave a public presentation to the Pendleton City Council as recently as Nov. 8.

An Eastern Oregon native, Lindstrom has worked for the city since 2002 and earned \$80,892 per year. As the building official, Lindstrom had the final say over whether a construction project meets building codes.

Lindstrom could not be reached as of press time.

This is the second community development employee to resign in 2016 under vague circumstances.

The city announced the resignation of city planner Evan MacKenzie in January, and while MacKenzie said it was because of a "difference of opinions," the city never

provided a reason for his departure.

Building inspector Ty Woolsey will act as interim building official and will address Lindstrom's permanent replacement "at a future date," Kerns wrote.

Mishra and Zenger nominated for state boards

HERMISTON — Two Umatilla County residents will be considered by the Oregon Senate for appointment to state boards during Legislative Days in December.

Jon Mishra of Hermiston and Sharon Zenger of Pendleton were nominated by Governor Kate Brown on Monday.

Mishra, who works as director of special programs for the Hermiston School District, is up for consideration to join the Fair Dismissal Appeals Board for a four-year term. The board hears the appeals of teachers and school administrators dismissed from their jobs and sets uniform standards for fair dismissal procedures.

Zenger, a teacher for the visually impaired at the InterMountain Education Service District, would join the Commission for the Blind for a four-year term. The commission serves visually impaired Oregonians through job training, job placement assistance and other resources.

Simmons Insurance holds grand opening at former RoeMarks building

HERMISTON — Simmons Insurance Group will unveil the newly renovated RoeMarks building at an open house on Nov. 29.

The insurance company in May purchased the former western wear store in downtown Hermiston, which had sat empty for nearly four years. They will maintain offices on the eastern side of the building and have leased portions of the western side (on the corner of Main Street and Northeast Second Street) to Scrubs and Bloomz Coffee Bar.

The 6,000-square-foot space on the eastern side will hold administrative offices and commercial insurance for Simmons Insurance while the company's home, auto and health offices will remain at 702 E. Main St.

Renovations to the new space included hundreds of thousands of dollars' worth of new HVAC, lighting, windows, flooring and walls. A facade grant from the Hermiston Urban Renewal Agency provided the money for windows to be restored to the upper floors.

To see the new office, visit the grand opening and ribbon cutting on Tuesday, Nov. 29 at noon.

BOARDMAN



Contributed photo

Nearly 40 volunteers, mostly Riverside High School students, worked Saturday to decorate the city of Boardman for Christmas.

Volunteers get in Christmas spirit

East Oregonian

It's beginning to feel a lot like Christmas in Boardman.

Nearly 40 volunteers — made up mostly of Riverside High School students — turned out Saturday to help put up Christmas decorations around the

city, including thousands of Christmas lights, garland and wreaths.

Also during the week of Thanksgiving, volunteers plan to place the "Merry Christmas" and "Feliz Navidad" lighted signs at the splash pad park along Northeast Front Street.

The city of Boardman sponsors the Christmas Decoration Committee every year. Mayor and committee chairman Sandy Toms said this year's volunteer turnout was the largest ever, and she was happy to see so many students come out and help.



Good Shepherd Health Care System is proud to introduce Allison Khavkin, M.D., OB/GYN

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