

Farm Fair ready to grow into new space

By **JADE MCDOWELL**
EO Media Group

The Hermiston Farm Fair is giving the Eastern Oregon Trade and Event Center its first trade show.

The Farm Fair is moving from the Hermiston Conference Center to EOTEC this year after outgrowing the conference center. Debbie Pedro, director of the Hermiston Chamber of Commerce, said last year they had to turn away 10 vendors.

“We just absolutely had no more space for people,” she said.

The new, bigger space means that’s not a problem anymore. No one got turned away this year and there is more space for vendors to bring in larger pieces of equipment and other displays.

Pedro said there will also be more educational sessions running throughout the day thanks to the extra meeting rooms at EOTEC. Before, the biggest sessions were held on the stage, which seated 100 people. This year the largest meeting area will hold 220.

“It will be much nicer for folks who are attending,” she said.

Holding the trade show at EOTEC has a trickle-down benefit for other events as well. Pedro said it frees up the conference center to hold the Hermiston Farm Fair Banquet, which has outgrown several venues over the years.

It also allows the Hermiston Festival of Trees, which usually has to wait until the Farm Fair is over, to set up at the conference center sooner.

Pedro said there are a few trade-offs to moving out at EOTEC, such as less visibility, but overall the move is a positive one that will allow for a bigger, better Hermiston Farm Fair.

“It’ll be great,” she said. “Our goal is to grow the event and have it be the premier agricultural trade show in Eastern Oregon.”



Hermiston Mayor Dave Drotzmann speaks during an open house in May for the Eastern Oregon Trade and Event Center in Hermiston.

Phil Hamm, director of the Hermiston Agricultural Research and Extension Center, said when the Farm Fair moved from its original location of Thompson Hall into the larger Hermiston Conference Center years ago, it got “150 percent better.”

“This has the potential to have the same effect,” he said.

Hamm said he believes the trade show will continue to grow now that it has room to start expanding again. He also pointed to the extra sessions that were already added this year thanks to the increase in meeting spaces, which should accommodate presentations much better than crowding people onto

the “noisy and cumbersome” stage.

“We have a huge opportunity there to grow,” he said.

Heather Cannell, business manager at EOTEC, said the event will be the center’s biggest so far in terms of traffic flow, and the first of what they hope are many trade shows to come.

In addition to more space, she said the benefits of using EOTEC will also include significantly more parking and an array of audio-visual equipment hardwired into the building for use by presenters.

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Visitors file through the front doors of the Eastern Oregon Trade and Event Center in May for an open house for the first of multiple buildings that will be built on the grounds in Hermiston.





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