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## HERMISTON



Santa Claus, Richard Scarlett, gives a hug to fourth-grader Brayden Fine after passing out gifts in the class Tuesday at West Park Elementary School in Hermiston. Staff photo by E.J. Harris

## PENDLETON

# Green light given to pot shops

Council settles on fees to open a business in town

By PHIL WRIGHT  
East Oregonian

Pendleton is open for marijuana businesses. But it will be a while before any marijuana businesses actually open in town.

The city council Tuesday night approved provisions to regulate the sale of marijuana on a 6-2 vote, with councilors Paul Chalmers and Tom Young opposing. Two issues drew the most discussion before the vote: city licensing fees for pot businesses and background checks.

Small businesses in Pendleton pay \$100 a year for a city license. But the city will charge recreational marijuana business owners \$1,550 for the initial business license application and a \$950 renewal fee. Non-retail pot business, such as grow operations, have to pay \$1,000 for the license and \$500 to renew. And the license for medical marijuana business costs \$600 with a renewal fee of \$300.

City attorney Nancy Kerns told the council the higher fees were so the city could recoup what the Oregon Department of Revenue will charge the city to collect taxes.

Brandon Krenzler during the public hearing portion told the council he was "95 percent" in favor of the city's proposal. He and potential business partner Brad Olson, owner of Cadillac Jack's Saloon & Grill, Pendleton, plan to open a recreational marijuana shop at 1733 S.W. Court Ave. Krenzler suggested the city "dramatically" increase its fees for marijuana businesses while being more specific in the criteria that could disqualify someone from having a license.

Kerns in response said she drafted the language to allow for "local discretion" when it comes

See POT/8A

# SANTA SURPRISE

St. Nick visit helps students transition to new classroom

By JAYATI RAMAKRISHNAN  
East Oregonian

Students in West Park Elementary's Social Communications classes were delighted to get a visit from Santa, who stopped by Tuesday morning to deliver some Christmas gifts.

And some couldn't believe their eyes. "This is the first time I ever met Santa before," said Jackson Ryan, a fourth grader wearing a Sonic the Hedgehog cap under his Santa hat.

The surprise was furnished by the Hermiston Board of Realtors, who collected funds and purchased gifts for the class. All the students in the class are autistic.

Santa and Mrs. Claus, played by Richard Scarlett and Wanda Hunt, individually greeted each child in the class, handing out a candy cane, a hat, and a gift. They also read the students a classic holiday story — "The Night Before Christmas."

Christmas spirit was high in the classroom, with students singing carols and eagerly opening gifts on the last day before holiday break.

Brayden Fine, a fourth grader, was excited about his gifts, but told Santa what he thinks the



Students open the presents they received from the Hermiston Board of Realtors on Tuesday at West Park Elementary School in Hermiston. Staff photo by E.J. Harris

See SANTA/8A

"Christmas isn't about toys. It's about loving and helping other people."

— Brayden Fine, fourth grader at West Park Elementary

## PENDLETON

# Shopping relief comes in time for Christmas



Courtney Bissinger looks for items on the shelf while shopping at Wal-Mart as her daughter, Ember, rests in a new Caroline's Cart, a shopping cart for special needs children, on Tuesday in Pendleton. Staff photo by E.J. Harris

Special needs shopping cart makes difference for mother

By PHIL WRIGHT  
East Oregonian

The new shopping cart carrying 3-year-old Ember glided through the aisles. Mother Courtney Bissinger hadn't found grocery shopping at the Pendleton Wal-Mart so easy in a while.

Ember has seeing and hearing problems, cerebral palsy and severe neurological damage. Bissinger, 31, a Pendleton native, said pushing her daughter in a wheelchair and maneuvering a grocery cart at the same time made shopping a pain.

"Not everybody has the luxury of an extra set of hands or a caregiver," she said. "I needed something that would let me shop

more than her wheelchair."

Ember's wheelchair can accommodate only a small basket, and she is getting too big for the seat that fits into regular shopping carts. The solution was Caroline's Cart, a shopping cart for special needs children. The six-wheeled cart has a rear-facing seat with a harness that can secure a person weighing up to 250 pounds, according to manufacturer information, while the basket is almost the size of a regular shopping cart.

Bissinger said she found out about the helpful carts from friends on social media who alert her to contraptions that could make life easier for her and Ember. She shops at Wal-Mart, so several weeks ago she asked the company about getting some of the carts for the Pendleton store.

Shawna Nulf has 23 years with Wal-Mart,

See CART/8A