

HERMISTON

Cultural groups celebrate diversity

By JAYATI RAMAKRISHNAN
East Oregonian

Hermiston, in the middle of the Eastern Oregon desert, may not immediately spring to mind as a hub of cultural diversity.

But a group of locals is working to change that perception, with a recent event highlighting cultures from around the world.

"We were brainstorming on how to provide an educational and cultural experience for the community," said Jesus Rome, one of the people responsible for the celebration, "Around the World in One Fun Day." The event featured performers and educational booths from six different groups: Made to Thrive African Drum Ensemble, Polynesian Cultural Group, Filipino Cultural Group, Yakima Valley Aztec Dancers, and groups representing Nepalese culture and Native Americans performed and had booths at the event, which drew a small gathering after Hermiston's Funfest on July 8.

In addition to those cultural groups, the Hermiston Cultural Awareness Club also helped plan the event. That group is best known for organizing the town's annual Martin Luther King Jr. Peace Walk.

Suva Shakya, who is Nepalese, was one of the organizers of the event. A Hermiston resident for nearly a decade, Shakya said he has noticed a lot of positive changes since he arrived with the way the town reacts to people from different cultures.

"When I moved here, I found the culture different," he said. "I felt like people looked at me like I didn't belong."

Shakya said he feels websites like Facebook have changed things, bringing people together and exposing them to new ideas and places, even if they've never been there.



An Aztec performer blows a conch shell at the Hermiston "Around the World in One Fun Day" event.

Photo contributed by Jesus Rome



Prabha Subedi and Dina Upadhyah hold the Nepal flag in their booth at Hermiston's "Around the World in One Fun Day" event.

Photo contributed by Suva Shakya

Tile and Marvin Hamilton, from the Polynesian Cultural Group, said they got to know the other organizers of the event through various avenues, but all shared an interest in spreading cultural awareness in the community.

"Jesus and I started talking," Marvin said. "We found out about people from different areas, and found that there's a lot of people from different countries and cultures here. We wanted to recognize what makes us unique and special — and

also just (have) a fun time."

Rome's wife, Dawn, said the event was impressive for a first-year endeavor.

"Several years ago, Jesus and I went to an event in Walla Walla — a fantastic multicultural event that they've been doing for years. I really felt like our event, the entertainment we had rivaled theirs."

Dawn, a Hermiston resident since about 2000, also said she has seen the community become more receptive to different cultures.

HERMISTON

City to take over Steelhead Park

By JADE MCDOWELL
East Oregonian

The city of Hermiston is adding a new park to its books.

On Monday the city council voted unanimously to approve an agreement with the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife to take over Steelhead Park, a five-acre piece of land along the Umatilla River south of Highland Avenue.

The city hopes to eventually build a boat launch and restrooms at the park, but its primary reason for acquiring the land is to build the planned West Highland Trail through a corner of the property, looping the trail from Highland Avenue under the bridge and into Riverfront Park next door.

The property is mostly undeveloped other than a small gravel parking area near the road. The city has agreed to make improvements in exchange for ODFW giving it to them for free.

"There's a lot of potential for passive recreation," parks and recreation director Larry Fetter said.

The council also approved a resolution allowing the Oregon Department of Transportation to enter into negotiations on the city's behalf for the 20-foot rights-of-way needed to build the West Highland Trail parallel to the south side of Highland Avenue.

Part of that resolution states that eminent domain could be used to condemn property if a deal cannot be reached, but city manager Byron Smith said the resolution is just a formality and the city isn't planning to exercise that power.

"It's not our intent," he said. "In fact, we would be likely to change the design if it came to that."

The resolution passed 5-1, with Doug Primmer stating he wouldn't vote for anything that could lead to condemnation and Rod Hardin declaring a conflict of interest because he is the principal at Hermiston Christian Center & School, which is one of the properties affected. Clara Beas Fitzgerald was absent.

On Monday the council also approved a new batch of light poles for Main Street as part of the Hermiston Downtown Association's efforts to beautify the area. The 14 new light poles will be black with more decorative features,

"This will not be 100 percent smooth. But it will be nice, it will be good and it will get better every year."

— **Byron Smith,**
Hermiston city manager

including arms supporting the Hermiston city logo and self-irrigating hanging flower baskets. The project will cost \$79,788 total, but will result in some energy savings and rebates due to the switch to LED lighting. Hermiston Energy Services superintendent Nate Rivera said the electrical outlets at the base of the poles will also have more capacity than the current ones, which should reduce the number of times vendors overload and short out the system during events.

City finance director Amy Palmer gave her last financial report to the city council. Palmer is resigning to take care of an ailing family member. Mayor David Drotzmann praised her for the "leadership and hard work" she had provided in helping the city accomplish its goals of financial stability and accountability. Palmer got a little emotional when talking about how she had arranged to leave the city's investments in a place where they can safely "ride" for at least six months as the city selects and trains a new department head.

"I shouldn't really get choked up about money," she laughed. "But I take my job very seriously."

The council also discussed the final weeks of preparation for the Eastern Oregon Trade and Event Center before the Umatilla County Fair and Farm-City Pro Rodeo from Aug. 8-12. City manager Byron Smith, who is also the chair of the EOTEC board, said that the grounds are bigger and better than the old venue on Orchard Avenue, but the public should be prepared to be patient while some of the bumps are worked out in the first year.

"This will not be 100 percent smooth," he said. "But it will be nice, it will be good and it will get better every year."

Contact Jade McDowell at jmcdowell@eastoregonian.com or 541-564-4536.

Fire restrictions increased on private forestland

East Oregonian

The Oregon Department of Forestry is increasing fire restrictions on private, state, county, municipal and tribal lands across northeast Oregon.

Additional restrictions will go into effect beginning Wednesday, and fall under ODF's Regulated Use Closure for the Northeast Oregon District — which includes Umatilla, Union, Baker and Wallowa counties, as well as small portions of Morrow, Grant and Malheur counties.

"The increased restrictions are put into place to help prevent human-caused fires," said Matt Howard, Wallowa unit forester for ODF. "The fuel conditions have reached the point where we need to try and prevent as many fire starts as possible."

Fire prevention measures include:

- Open fires are prohibited, including campfires, charcoal fires, cooking fires and warming fires, except at designated locations and state parks.
- Debris burning is prohibited,

including the use of burn barrels.

- Chainsaw use is prohibited between the hours of 10 a.m. and 8 p.m. Chainsaws are allowed during all other hours, though cutters need to have an ax, shovel and minimum 8-ounce fire extinguisher on hand at all times. In addition, one-hour fire watch is required after cutting.
- Mowing dried grass with power-driven equipment, as well as cutting, grinding or welding metal, is also prohibited between 10 a.m.

and 8 p.m.

- Smoking is prohibited except in vehicles on improved roads, in boats on the water or within a cleared area.
- Fireworks, exploding targets and tracer ammunition are all prohibited.

So far this year, northeast Oregon has experienced seven human-caused fires that have burned 22.6 acres on private land. Similar restrictions are also in effect on public land, including the Umatilla, Wallowa-Whitman and Malheur national forests.

BRIEFLY

Class takes flight with RC planes and quadcopter

PENDLETON — An introductory class for youths is scheduled on designing and building RC planes or quadcopters — sometimes called drones.

The RC Workshop is Saturday, Aug. 5 from 9 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. at Grecian Heights Park, 1910 S.W. Athens, Pendleton. Participants should bring lunch, water, chairs and sunscreen.

The fee is \$20 and people need to register by Tuesday, Aug. 1.

Pendleton Parks & Recreation is partnering with the Pendleton Props RC Club to bring the fun and excitement of RC planes and quadcopters to youths in Pendleton. The group looks forward to introducing and teaching kids about designing, building and flying remote-controlled aircraft. The class will demonstrate how aerodynamics work, different build processes and how to fly RC.

The aircrafts are made using foam board and hot glue, and are non-powered free flight aircraft that are launched from a catapult launcher. Prizes will be given to farthest flown, straightest flight and best concept. Parents

are welcome to help and participate with their child.

To register, visit www.pendletonparksandrec.com or stop by the parks office, 865 Tutuilla Road. For more information, call 541-276-8100.

S.U.R.E. sets river beautification project

PENDLETON — S.U.R.E. (Stewards of the Umatilla River Environment) have set a river clean-up event in Pendleton.

For those who have adopted a stretch of the river parkway, this is a fun way to gather with friends and organization members to pitch in and clear trash from the parkway and riverbank. In addition, other individuals and families are welcome to come out and help in the beautification project.

And a few able-bodied and sure-footed people with appropriate footwear, who are willing to venture into the water, are needed to remove trash from the river. While the water level is low, algae makes the rocks very slippery.

Those planning to help are asked to meet Saturday, Aug. 5 at 9 a.m. at Stillman Park, 413 S.E. Byers Ave., Pendleton. After a safety briefing and assignments, people will work on clean-up efforts until 11 a.m. Recycling efforts are coordinated by Pendleton Robotics.

Afterwards, volunteers are invited to return to the park for a barbecue lunch. Members of VFW Post 922 will be manning the grills and the Baha'i Community is providing dessert.

To ensure there are enough gloves, trash bags, refreshments and food for lunch, RSVP to kbbrown@eastoregonian.com.

SUBMIT COMMUNITY NEWS

Submit information to: community@eastoregonian.com or drop off to the attention of Tammy Malgesini at 333 E. Main St., Hermiston or Renee Struthers at 211 S.E. Byers Ave., Pendleton. Call 541-564-4539 or 541-966-0818 with questions.

Please Welcome



Aimee Rogers, MD
Urologist

Now Scheduling Appointments
541-966-0535

Dr. Rogers is originally from Southern California and graduated from Loyola University in Chicago. She attended medical school at the University Of Louisville School Of Medicine, and completed her residency in Urology in Morgantown, West Virginia at West Virginia University. She then spent three years at Reid Hospital in Richmond, Indiana. Dr. Rogers is Board Certified, American Board of Urology. Dr. Rogers has purchased a home in Pendleton and looks forward to being involved in the community.

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