

CONNECTING COMMUNITIES



EO Media Group File photo

In this 2015 file photo, Preston South poses for a selfie with Hermiston Crime Prevention Officer Erica Sandoval at an ice cream social block party in Hermiston. Berek South found the medallion hidden by Sandoval to earn the party in conjunction with National Night Out.

National Night Out promotes partnerships between neighbors, police

By TAMMY MALGESINI
East Oregonian

Communities across the United States are encouraging people to get out and get to know their neighbors during National Night Out.

In its 34th year, the Aug. 1 event promotes police-community partnerships and neighborhood camaraderie to help in creating safer living environments. The program's purpose is to enhance relationships between neighbors, law enforcement and other first responders to create a true sense of community.

Local law enforcement personnel and community leaders tout the benefits of National Night Out — especially in bringing police and citizens together in a relaxed setting.

Chief Jason Edmiston of the Hermiston Police Department said it's an important opportunity to engage the public in a positive manner. This is the 19th year the city has participated in the event. And the current timing, Edmiston said, is especially relevant with some perceptions about law enforcement across the country.

"It's an important time for us to ensure that we're engaging with the community," he said.

Shelly Studebaker, Pendleton Police Department community services officer, agreed. She said Eastern Oregon is fortunate that it hasn't experienced the level of negative sentiments toward police that some communities have. It's especially crucial, she said, to continue fostering positive relationships.

"We do recognize how important it is to get out in the community," she said. "We want to make sure when



Staff photo by Tammy Malgesini

Members of the Lindley and South families, who are neighbors in Hermiston, are the winners of an ice cream social block party after finding the golden medallion during Hermiston's National Night Out treasure hunt. After spending five hours Wednesday evening hunting along the walking trail on Highway 395, the group returned Thursday morning and found it in a metal sculpture of cattails across from Nookie's.

situations arise, that's not the only time they see us."

Laurie Nelsen of the Echo Public Library said National Night Out helps create a sense of community. The benefits of building relationships with law enforcement, she said, is invaluable.

"If people aren't afraid of police officers, they would be more willing to contact them if something is needed,"

Nelsen said.

Tim Miears, training officer/evidence custodian with Hermiston Police Department, said providing an avenue for the public to connect with first responders in a relaxed atmosphere goes a long way in building partnerships. Miears and Edmiston are tossing around ideas on how to facilitate even more opportunities.

"National Night Out is just one day out of the year where we can try to enhance the existing relationships and partnerships we have," Edmiston said.

Joyce Wright, Stanfield Police Department community resource officer, said Stanfield is resuming National Night Out activities after a 13-year hiatus. With several new personnel, Wright said it's the perfect time to partner with the community.

In addition, she said it's important to encourage neighbors to get to know each other. When neighbors communicate, Wright said, it has a direct impact on criminal activity.

"I think it helps immensely with cutting down crimes," she said.

Matt Peskin, founder and executive director of National Association of Town Watch, introduced the National Night Out program in 1984. The first National Night Out involved 2.5 million neighbors across 400 communities in 23 states. The event has grown to include 38 million people in 16,000 communities across the nation.

People are encouraged to host neighborhood block parties, festivals, parades, cookouts and other community events. For more information,

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— Shelly Studebaker,
Pendleton Police Department
community services officer

National Night Out

Pendleton Community Pool Party

- Tuesday, 6-8 p.m.
- Pendleton Aquatic Center
- More info: 541-276-4411, extension 1109

Festivities include free entry into the pool, where people can swim and engage in activities and games with prizes. Free hot dogs, beverages and snow cones will be served.

Hermiston Ice Cream Social Block Party

- Tuesday, 7 p.m.
- 1300 block of Southwest 10th Street
- More info: 541-667-5112

The Hermiston Police Department and city of Hermiston will serve ice cream with all the toppings in the neighborhood of the Lindley and South families, who found the medallion as part of the National Night Out treasure hunt. In addition, first responders and city leaders will visit as many block parties as possible.

Echo Neighbor of the Year & Celebration

- Tuesday, 6-8 p.m.
- Echo Masonic Lodge & George Park
- More info: 541-376-8411 or 541-449-3245

Free hot dogs, hamburgers, chips and drinks. Includes a youth bicycle rodeo with prizes, bingo and other games. Local businesses donated door prizes and items for raffle drawings. Also, a resident will be recognized as the Neighbor of the Year (nominations accepted through Monday).

Milton-Freewater Festivities

- Tuesday, 6-8 p.m.
- Milton-Freewater City Hall (outdoors)
- More info: 541-938-8247

Free ice cream, emergency responder vehicle tours, carnival games and prizes. Community members of all ages are encouraged to come out and meet their neighbors, police and community leaders.

Stanfield Good Neighbor of the Year & Celebration

- Tuesday, 6-8 p.m.
- Bard Park
- More info: www.cityofstanfield.com or 541-449-3245

Free hot dogs, hamburgers, chips and drinks. Features a youth bicycle rodeo (with prizes) and a drone obstacle race. Area businesses donated door prizes and raffle items. Also, a citizen will receive the Good Neighbor of the Year Award (nominations accepted through Monday). Evening concludes with free popcorn and outdoor movie.

visit <https://natw.org>.

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EO file photo

In this 2013 file photo, Pendleton Police Sgt. Howard Bowen places a tactical vest on Elizabeth Hearn during the National Night Out celebration at Roy Raley Park in Pendleton.