

HERMISTON

# Woman cleans up community one bag at a time

Miranda Ainsworth filled 49 bags last month

By **JADE MCDOWELL**  
East Oregonian

Every morning after she drops her son off at kindergarten, Miranda Ainsworth laces up her waterproof walking shoes and gets to work, cleaning up after Hermiston's litterbugs.

On Wednesday she was wading through waist-deep grass alongside Highway 207 on the south edge of town, using a plastic trash-grabbing claw to pull empty beer cans and plastic bags from the weeds. So far this month, Ainsworth said she has picked up 23 kitchen-sized garbage bags full of trash. Last month she filled 49 bags.

Ainsworth isn't paid for her work, and her community service isn't court-ordered. She's just an average citizen who decided that she could be putting her morning walks to better use.

"I try and do my part to help around the community," she said.

Ainsworth said she started a few years ago in Kent, Washington, before continuing the practice when she moved to Hermiston in February. She said she has always noticed litter in parks and along roadways, and it bothers her.



Staff photo by Jade McDowell

Miranda Ainsworth picks up trash along Highway 207.

"It speaks a lot about the community," she said.

First she started bringing along the plastic grocery bags so she could grab a few things along the way, but after she ran out of grocery bags she switched to larger garbage bags and started getting more serious about planning

her walks around areas of town that have litter problems. Beverage containers, cigarette packs and paper are the most common items, but sometimes she makes more interesting finds, particularly along the railroad tracks.

"I found part of a TV. I found a vacuum cleaner,"

she said. "It was tossed along the roadside and had a lot of dirt on it."

Once she found a collection of used needles and let the police department know so that they could be disposed of safely.

She said there are areas with high-speed traffic that

she feels more comfortable cleaning up now that her son is in school and not accompanying her on walks. She tries to be careful by walking toward traffic along roadways with larger shoulders, which reduces the chance of being hit by a car. Sometimes she gets dirty looks, she said,

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— **Miranda Ainsworth**

from people who see her in grubby clothes carrying garbage bags and don't seem to realize what she is doing. But other times people take the time to ask her what she's doing, and respond with enthusiastic thanks when she explains.

Ainsworth said sometimes she gets busy and only goes out two or three times in a week, but for the most part she is out there five mornings a week picking up trash for at least an hour. She is looking for a part-time job, which may cut into her walking time, but for now she hopes her habit inspires others to take better care of their community.

"When people see something clean, they generally try and keep it clean, but if it's already dirty they think, 'Oh, it doesn't matter,'" she said.

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Staff photo by Jayati Ramakrishnan

Brynley and Jackson Allen search for the perfect pumpkin at Bellinger Farms Pumpkin Patch on Thursday.

## Corn maze, pumpkin patch put locals in Halloween spirit

By **JAYATI RAMAKRISHNAN**  
East Oregonian

Kids of all ages enjoyed the various fall activities around Hermiston and Echo on a crisp Thursday afternoon.

"The turnout has been awesome," said Gina Tyhuis who, along with her husband Bob and son Brent, own and operate the Echo Corn Maze, on 100 N. Dupont St. in Echo.

Tyhuis said visitors have enjoyed the maze, which is haunted on some evenings, as well as some of the educational activities they offer.

"We have some agricultural science discovery field trips," she said. There are four stations for those visits, including a "mini-maze," where kids can learn about how corn grows, and a pumpkin patch. There is also a corn pit, where kids can hunt for treasure, and a straw bale maze, which kids can complete in teams. One team member gets blindfolded, and the other gives them verbal clues to help complete the maze.

Tyhuis said the full corn maze should take people about 20 minutes to complete if they follow the map, which is available at the start of the maze. If not, she said, it can take anywhere from half an hour to two hours.

Cort Coelho, 5, finished the maze in record time.

"It wasn't hard," he said. "My mom helped me."

Further north at Bellinger Farms and pumpkin patch, several families hunted for the perfect pumpkin. The store offers tractor rides, and has an area set up with hay



Staff photo by Jayati Ramakrishnan

Jeff, Cort and Amy Coelho of Echo smile as they reach the end of the Echo Corn Maze on Thursday afternoon.

bales and pumpkins where people can take photos.

Brynley Allen, 6, and her brother Jackson, 3, were pleased with their finds.

"I'm going to carve a scary face on mine," she said.

Addie Pena, a Bellinger Farms employee, said the season had been fairly busy, between the general public and visits from schools. They have had students from Hermiston and surrounding schools, and from as far away as Arlington and Condon.

Bellinger Farms' pumpkin patch, at 1823 S. Hwy 395, is open from 3 to 5 on weekdays, and all day on weekends, until Halloween.

The Echo Corn Maze is open Friday from 3 to 9 p.m., from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. on Saturday, from 10 a.m. to 9 p.m. on Sunday and from 3 to 10 p.m. on Tuesday for Halloween. On Monday, the maze will have a "bring your pet" event, with hours posted on Facebook in the coming days.

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## MILTON-FREEWATER

### Old PGG building up for auction

By **GEORGE PLAVERN**  
East Oregonian

The former Pendleton Grain Growers retail building in Milton-Freewater has hit the auction block.

Bids are due Wednesday, Nov. 15 for the 29,500-square-foot facility on East Broadway Avenue and North Russell Street. Realty Marketing/Northwest of Portland is handling the sale.

Two other PGG sites on Northeast First Avenue in Milton-Freewater are also up for auction, located near Blue Mountain Cider Company and Watermill Winery. The properties can be purchased together or separately, said John Rosenthal, president and principal Oregon broker for Realty Marketing/Northwest.

"We've had pretty good interest," Rosenthal said. "There's a lot of options for it."

PGG closed its retail stores across Umatilla County in 2014 as part of an effort to save the financially struggling co-op. Members ultimately voted to dissolve PGG two years later, in



Photo contributed by Realty Marketing/Northwest

Bids are due Nov. 15 for the former Pendleton Grain Growers retail building in Milton-Freewater.

order to recoup as much of their earnings as possible.

The price for the Milton-Freewater store, which includes a card lock fueling facility, is falling. PGG reduced the price from \$628,800 to \$400,000, or about \$10 per square foot, and the co-op is also offering short-term financing as an additional incentive.

The other two industrial sites are \$60,000 for 21,206 square feet, and \$40,000 for 18,295 square feet. Both are zoned for industrial and commercial use.

About a half-dozen people have already inspected the sites, Rosenthal said. Bid packages are

available by calling 1-800-845-3524.

Another PGG store — this one in Athena — was recently purchased by the nonprofit Mainstreet Athena Association, which will hold a series of public meetings to determine its future use. The former Hermiston store on South First Street is now a Napa Auto Parts location.

A spokesman for PGG did not return a request for information regarding the status of the former Pendleton store and offices and Southwest Dorion Avenue.

Contact **George Plaven** at [gplaven@eastoregonian.com](mailto:gplaven@eastoregonian.com) or 541-966-0825.

## BRIEFLY

### Good Shepherd offers preview sale, free flu shots

HERMISTON — The annual Christmas Preview Sale of the Good Shepherd Medical Center Gift Shop offers a chance to receive a 10 percent discount on gift items.

The event is Friday, Oct. 27 from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. in Conference Room 1-2 at the hospital, 610 N.W. 11th St. Hermiston.

Money raised from the event helps the Good Shepherd Hospital Auxiliary provide scholarships for area students pursuing a

medical career and equipment needed by the hospital.

And with flu season just around the corner, people can protect themselves by getting a vaccination.

A free flu shot clinic is planned Saturday from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. at Good Shepherd Medical Center, 610 N.W. 11th St., Hermiston. It will be held in Conference Rooms 1-2, which is located near the hospital pharmacy.

For more information about the hospital auxiliary, contact [juner1942@gmail.com](mailto:juner1942@gmail.com) or call 541-667-3509.

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