



Staff photo by Kathy Aney
Volunteers bow their heads in prayer before serving at the free community Thanksgiving dinner at Hermiston High School.

HERMISTON: Dinners started in the late 1980s

Continued from 1A

were doing.

“Why do we need to pick someone up?” One of the girls asked.

“Because it’s a nice thing to do,” Adam said. “And, because she might not have a car to get there herself.”

The girls were eager to help their parents, carrying bags full of meals up to the door and helping unload the boxes. At each home, the family introduced themselves, asked the name of the person they met, and wished them a happy Thanksgiving.

Some people receiving deliveries are alone, or waiting for families to arrive. “We’ve been instructed, if they want to invite us into the house, we can go in and give them company for a few minutes,” Adam said. He recalled a home they went to their first year of volunteering.

“The home wasn’t fit to live in,” he said. “But the lady invited us in — all she wanted to do was talk.”

Sometimes, they had unexpected orders come in. At one delivery, a man in a neighboring apartment saw them and asked if they had any food left.

“No, but they’re serving dinner at the high school. We can place an order for you,” Rachel said.

Twenty minutes later, they were back with hot meals for the man.

The Archers’ final assignment for the day was driving a woman, Mary Getchel, to the meal. Jules, the Archers’ eight year-old daughter, chatted cheerfully with Getchel, who shared a little about herself.

“I’ve lived here for 15 years,” she said. “I like the dinner.”

Joe Kiser, who helped start the Community Fellowship Dinners in the late 1980s, said he was pleased to see how it’s expanded.

“The first meal had 11 people,” he said. “From there, it blossomed



Staff photo by Kathy Aney
Cole Ayers, 8, and his mother, Elissa Ayers, volunteer at the free community Thanksgiving dinner at Hermiston High School.

to about 30 people. And from there it just exploded, into the hundreds.”

Kiser’s wife, Laurie Ball-Kiser, coordinated the meal for several years. She passed away in June, but the event is still going strong.

“The goal was just to open up and help people during Thanksgiving and Christmas,” Kiser said. “Just do something for the community.”

For Adrea Powers and her six year-old son Kody, the dinner was the beginning of what they hope is a new tradition. After moving to Echo a month ago, Powers said she and her son were looking for something to do on Thanksgiving.

“I was trying to instill in him the true meaning of Thanksgiving,” she said. “To serve and participate

and be a part of our new community.”

Powers said she didn’t register to volunteer, but showed up on Thursday and just asked if they could do anything to help.

“We don’t have family in the area, and don’t know a lot of people — it didn’t make sense for us to cook on our own,” she said.

But at the end of the meal, Powers and her son had made friends with their tablemates, longtime volunteers Larry Parvin and Marian Perdas.

“Everyone has been receptive — it’s been very nice to meet other people,” she said.

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ARCHIE’S: Some came as far away as North Carolina

Continued from 1A

The Archie’s Thanksgiving event usually attracts around 100 people, Contway said, and many of them who came expressed similar sentiments: gratitude for the deliciousness of the meal, relief that they didn’t have to make the meal themselves and an appreciation for the positive contribution to the community the restaurant makes through the donation drive.

Terry and Sandy Mayberry of Pendleton have been longtime Archie’s Thanksgiving attendees, but they brought in children, grandchildren and other relatives this year. Some came as far away as Boise and North Carolina to join them for Turkey Day.

The Mayberry’s Archie’s evangelism spread to the next table over. Sheila Campbell of Pendleton is friends with the Mayberrys, and when her plans fell through, she invited a few generations of family on her first trek to Archie’s Thanksgiving feast.

While there were plenty of out-of-towners celebrating their Thanksgiving at Archie’s, Pilot Rockers also made their presence felt. Patsy Boader said she and her group of local friends meet for a cup of coffee every day at Archie’s. Stopping in for a quick bite of Turkey is continuing that routine in a different way.

“I actually live in Pendleton now, but I guess old traditions die hard,” said Virginia Jones, who was seated next to Boader.

Some guests needed Archie’s in a pinch. Elsie Tester and her family only live a couple blocks away from Archie’s and are regulars at the establishment. But their oven broke last week, and Archie’s turned into a much-needed backup option.



Staff photo by Kathy Aney
Elizabeth Tester, 4, holds a plate loaded with Thanksgiving dinner on Thursday afternoon at Archie’s Restaurant in Pilot Rock. The eatery doesn’t charge for the meal, but instead collects donations for the Pilot Rock Food Pantry.

Archie’s Thanksgiving patrons left with full stomachs, but they also made sure that other people in the community would eventually get some food as well. Nearly everyone interviewed said they intended

to donate to the Pilot Rock Food Pantry.

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INTERNET: Most landline phones are internet-based now

Continued from 1A

company is doing, go to a different company.”

There are fears among consumers, however, that all internet service providers will move in the same direction, leaving few real choices. When American Airlines started charging fees for all checked baggage in 2008 it caused an outcry from customers, but within weeks the other airlines began to follow suit.

Wtechlink co-founder Byron Wysocki of Pendleton said ending net neutrality only seems to benefit stockholders of major communications companies. One downside for consumers could be your internet service looking a lot like cable TV service. Customers might have to pay \$5 for a package to watch Netflix, \$5 more to use Facebook and other social media, and so on.

“That, I think, is a very scary idea,” he said, and also could hurt the next great website or internet innovation.

Oliver Brown, owner of Game King, Pendleton, plays online games that require large amounts of bandwidth. He said he is opposed to ending net neutrality and concerned with the possibility of paying more to access services.

“The net is now a necessity,” Brown said, and the way to access everything from entertainment to job applications to checking account balances. He said providers charging more for “fast lanes” would hurt the customer.

“For the people who struggle to pay bills and feed kids, \$20 to \$30 extra a month is a lot of money,” he said.

The move from neutrality also is surprising, he said. The FCC in recent years has fined companies for throttling data and streaming services. T-Mobile, for example, paid \$48 million in 2016 to settle an FCC complaint when the company slowed data for its heaviest users.

Brown also said he doesn’t like the politics of the situation.

“I am really disappointed, you know?” he said. “How are we letting these big companies keep getting more and more advantages? They already nickel and dime you.”

Franell can see possible advantages for consumers, however, if providers are given flexibility. He said some consumers might not mind if lesser-used websites take a little longer to load if it means EOT can give them faster video streaming.

“I can’t give Netflix preferential treatment on my network, even if all my customers want Netflix,” he said.

Franell said most landline phones also are internet-based these days, and regulations prevent him from prioritizing a 911 call over web browsing.

Wysocki also expressed doubts about companies slowing down data. He said that technology is allowing internet speeds to double every 16-24 months.

Social media has been full of warnings that internet service providers such as Charter could divide the internet up into packages like cable TV, holding some websites hostage unless customers pay a higher price for a premium package, or hurting small businesses by slowing their websites to a crawl because they can’t afford to pay a premium for preferential treatment. While that would be legal, Franell said people need to remember that the internet was not a Title II utility before 2015 and yet those scenarios were not happening. He feels it is unlikely that a repeal of that 2015 classification would suddenly bring about a dramatic change in users’ internet experience.

He also felt talking points about internet service providers being able to sell customers’ web-browsing data were overblown, since they are “probably the only folks not selling it.”

“EOT is not collecting and selling your data,” he said. “That’s not our business model. That’s a Google thing. That’s an Amazon thing.”

Wysocki, however, said providers would be able to look at what you watch online in real time and discriminate against websites or services they don’t like or have a beef with.

Pai said repeal of some FCC regulations could help providers have more resources to expand services in rural areas, and Franell agreed. He said EOT doesn’t take any government money and is therefore much less regulated than some providers, and yet about 20 hours of staff time a week are spent on FCC reporting, out of a 15-person staff.

“Every regulatory burden means I’m spending time and money responding to the FCC instead of spending time and money on customers,” Franell said.

He also said the move should mean an end to franchise fees from municipalities such as Hermiston, which recently voted to impose franchise fees on internet sales starting Jan. 1.

INTERSECTION: 16 percent of drivers go too fast to stop there

Continued from 1A

section was a four-way stop,” Carver told the board, “you would decrease drastically the number of accidents that are there.”

County Public Works Director Tom Fellows said the traffic at the intersection is “relatively low,” with about 1,200 vehicles using it a day. He explained the county operates under the federal “Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices,” which sets standards for traffic signs and the like, and the two stops there now exceed the standard for the road’s traffic.

Speeding, however, is a problem though the intersection. Fellows said the county a few years ago found 16 percent of drivers go too fast to stop there. He also presented options to improve road safety, including adding beacons to warn drivers to slow down and stop. Adding signs to make the stop a four-way was the cheapest option at about \$1,000 total.

County Emergency Manager Tom Fellows told the board whatever option is worth the cost when they consider lives are at stake.

Commissioner Larry Givens, Bill Elfering and George Murdock agreed the site was dangerous and approved the additional stop signs. The board also told staff to research and make a recommendation on what lighting will improve sign visibility.

Fellows at the end of the discussion said the county does not stock stop signs and would have to order them.

In other business, the board approved ambulance service area franchise agreements for Pendleton, the Hermiston/Umatilla area, Milton-Freewater, Athena and Weston, and the Umatilla Indian Reservation. The franchises are for five years. The board also approved a year-to-year franchise for the Mill Creek area because the service provider may not be

able to provide coverage for five years.

The board also adopted the updated ambulance service area plan. Roberts said the Oregon Health Authority praised the county for the thoroughness of its plan, which required some changes to languages to be consistent with state requirements, such as noting first responders are “licensed now as an emergency medical responder.”

But he said he took exception to the health authority’s finding that Athena and Weston don’t have adequate ambulance coverage. He said reorganization addressed that issue, and he would notify the state.

The sheriff’s office also received upgrades to its vehicle fleet with the board’s approval of three 2018 Ford Police Utility Interceptors for \$32,300 each from the dealership in Gresham along with a utility task vehicle for \$32,878 from Morrow County Grain Growers. The county’s fleet management plan covers the cost of the Interceptors, and grant funds pay for the 2018 Polaris XP 1000 Crew HVAC, which enhances search and rescue operations, especially in heavy snow or on tough terrain, and can transport injured people.

The county’s veteran services also received the OK to buy three new 2018 Ford Fusions for \$17,900 each from Tom Denchel Ford Country, Hermiston.

And in one more vehicle move, the board approved donating an old decontamination trailer to the Northwest Incident Management Team 6. The trailer is from the days of the Chemical Stockpile Emergency Preparedness Program and is deteriorating on county land. Staff said the incident team can put the triple-axle fifth wheel to real use for fighting fires.

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