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WINNER OF THE 2017 ONPA GENERAL EXCELLENCE AWARD

One dollar



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

Sophomore Alejandro Gutierrez, right, gets counseling for his class schedule from graduation coordinator Omar Medina on Wednesday at Hermiston High School.

PENDLETON Data center delays lease again

By ANTONIO SIERRA
East Oregonian

While data centers have turned into a legitimate industry on the west side of Umatilla County, Pendleton is still waiting for its first.

It's not from lack of trying. In 2015, the city signed a 30-year lease with Makad Corp. to open a new, \$45 million data center on the Airport Road extension.

More than two years later, the city is still without a data center or a rental payment for the 12 acres it leased to the Vancouver, Wash., company.

At an October 2015 meeting, Makad officials told the city council that the subsidiary that was going to handle the project, CyDat Industries, needed a two-year grace period on \$2,460-per-month rent while it conducted feasibility studies.

The rent deferments are supposed to deliver longterm benefits if the data center opens: 45 jobs and up to \$8 million in property tax revenue over the life of the lease, in addition to revenue from the rent, which will increase annually.

If Makad's project came to fruition, the city would introduce its own set of incentives, including waived sewer connection fees, free electrical and fiber connections, a 5 percent reduction of permitting fees per job with a 50 percent reduction ceiling and assistance in qualifying for Pendleton's enterprise zone, which would exempt the data center from paying property taxes for three to five years.

A \$300,000 sewer extension has already been completed.

But most of those incentives aren't close to being activated yet.

City manager Robb Corbett said Tuesday that the beginning of the lease payment had been pushed back to Jan. 1, 2019.

This is the second time the city has agreed to change

See MAKAD/8A

TABS ON GRADS

Hermiston grad rates lag behind as neighbors improve their rates

By JAYATI RAMAKRISHNAN
East Oregonian

The Oregon Department of Education released its annual graduation rates Thursday and Hermiston fell well below the state average.

Hermiston School District's graduation rate of 65.8 percent — a slight uptick from the previous year — is more than 10 points below the statewide graduation rate of 76.6 percent. The figure is derived from the percentage of students who receive a diploma four years after they begin high school.

Hermiston's rates have been lower than the state average for the last few years, and the rate this year was the lowest of all districts in Umatilla County.

Hermiston administrators acknowledged that the rates are not where they had hoped.

"I would love to at least hit the state average next year," said Hermiston High School Principal Tom Spoo. "And that would be a huge jump. The state average has been steadily climbing."

One factor in the low rates, Spoo said, was the 2016 dissolution of the Innovative Learning Center, Hermiston's alternative school. Those students were absorbed back into the high school.

"We're still seeing the ramifications of the

2016-17 SCHOOL YEAR

	Graduation	Dropout
Helix	93.3%	0%
Ione	90.0%	0%
Athena-Weston	86.8%	2.1%
Stanfield	86.7%	4.5%
Pilot Rock	85.2%	1.0%
Pendleton	83.0%	3.7%
Umatilla	81.7%	6.5%
Echo	81.0%	3.5%
Milton-Freewater	80.5%	4.0%
Morrow County	77.8%	3.5%
State of Oregon	76.7%	3.9%
Ukiah	75.0%	0%
Hermiston	65.8%	5.6%

ILC dissolving," Spoo said.

The graduation rate for Hermiston High School this year, including alternative school students, was 72.5 percent. Last year, with those students in a separate category, the high school graduation rate was 87.6 percent.

However, the district-wide graduation

See HERMISTON/8A

Pendleton high nears 95 percent graduation, other schools vary

By ANTONIO SIERRA
East Oregonian

For the second straight year, the Pendleton School District's graduation rate significantly exceed the state average. But the district's relatively high graduation rate belies a growing disparity between Pendleton's three high schools.

Matt Yoshioka, the district's director of curriculum, instruction and assessment, was excited about the 83 percent graduation rate for 2016-2017, only a point below the year before.

"Obviously, we're thrilled," he said.

Anchoring that overall statistic was the performance of Pendleton High School, which graduated 94.7 percent of its seniors.

PHS' success wasn't limited to a single demographic. No race, gender, socioeconomic background or other subgroup graduated at a rate less than 85 percent.

Pendleton High School's dropout rate was a paltry 0.5 percent, much smaller than the 3.6-percent rate district-wide.

Principal Dan Greenough said the key to Pendleton High School's success is the teachers and counselors who worked with the students along the way. Counselors were assigned to each subgroup to make sure students were doing what they needed to graduate on time.

See PENDLETON/8A



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

The HART shuttle leaves the bus stop at Walmart on Wednesday in Hermiston.

HERMISTON HART gives 2,723 free rides in first year

By JADE MCDOWELL
East Oregonian

Ridership on Hermiston's new bus system did not grow as quickly as anticipated during its first year of service, but it still fulfilled its purpose of providing free transportation to residents.

"Overall I'm really happy with it," said Susan Johnson, manager of Kayak Public Transit.

The HART began in January 2017 as a free public bus system run by the Confederated Tribes of the

Umatilla Indian Reservation under a contract with the city of Hermiston. Ridership numbers for its first year of operation show an average of 11.1 riders per day for the first nine months of 2017, which jumped to 11.8 riders per day after the city adjusted the route on Oct. 1 to make it more user-friendly. In all, it gave 2,723 rides in 2017.

The system's best month was November, when 283 rides were given over 19 service days. Assistant city

See HART/8A

