

HERMISTON

Cinco de Mayo brings cultures together

By **JADE MCDOWELL**
East Oregonian

Hermiston's Cinco de Mayo event spread across more real estate than ever this year as the celebration of Mexican heritage took over the grassy acres of the Eastern Oregon Trade and Event Center.

Rainstorms Saturday and Sunday afternoons may have kept a few people away, but crowds were still enjoying a mixture of carnival rides, food booths, contests, a beer garden and live entertainment. Political candidates for local and state offices were also there in force to meet and greet attendees.

Itzahiana Uriate, one of the three Cinco de Mayo court members, was enjoying a few tacos Saturday afternoon before stepping up on stage to introduce the court and help with an eating contest.

She said she saw her role on the court as a representative of Latino culture in the community, and was honored to speak at the Hermiston City Council recently.

"It was mostly my mom's idea because she thought, I don't know, that I was capable, and then I got excited about the thought of it," she said.

People sometimes incorrectly refer to Cinco de Mayo as "Mexican independence day," but Uriate explained the celebration marks the day that Mexico defeated a larger and more well-equipped army in the Battle of Puebla.



Staff photo by Jade McDowell

The Cinco de Mayo court poses for a photo during Hermiston's Cinco de Mayo celebration Saturday.

Uriate said winning the battle was a "great victory" to celebrate as a way for Mexican-Americans to recognize their Mexican heritage and culture.

Jessica Rodriguez, who was visiting the celebration from Pasco with Ricky Chicas, also alluded to Cinco de Mayo as a celebration of heritage.

"It just brings back memories of the culture, and we can interact with people who came from the same area as us," she said.

Part of that cultural celebration, of course, is also the traditional food, she said as she started in on a plate of authentic tacos from her parents' food stand set up at

EOTEC.

Rodriguez and Chicas said they were impressed with Saturday's event, and Chicas said he was looking forward to the live bands starting later.

Alejandra Aviles, who was watching some of the contests going on Saturday afternoon, said she was also looking forward to the bands. She said she comes to Hermiston's Cinco de Mayo celebration every year in anticipation of the music.

Before the bands came on, a series of contests were held on the stage. The first was an eating contest, which challenged a table full of children to eat six Gansitos, a chocolate-covered cake with cream

and berry filling.

The winner of the day (and the La Palma gift certificate) was Edwin Velasco, 9.

"I feel great, and I say thank you to the other kids who worked hard to win too," he said after his big win.

Before the contests began, the national anthem of Mexico and the national anthem of the United States of America were both sung, and city councilor Clara Beas Fitzgerald thanked everyone for coming and the sponsors of the event, which was in a new location this year after outgrowing downtown and Butte Park.

"Every year it is bigger and more beautiful," she said in Spanish.

BRIEFLY

Main Street water to be turned off

PENDLETON — As the city of Pendleton continues the replacement project for a water main underneath South Main Street, buildings near the intersection of Main Street and Emigrant Avenue will have their water service interrupted on Wednesday and Thursday.

According to a city press release, contractors are ready to tie in the new main, which will require city workers to shut off water from 10 p.m. Wednesday to 6 a.m. Thursday.

The release states that the city has personally contacted affected customers and is aiming for minimal disruption.

The construction has mostly affected parking and traffic through the 400 block of Main Street, although the city adopted a Monday through Thursday work schedule to mitigate impact to nearby businesses and the Pendleton Farmers Market.

Bobbi Conner joins Oregon Community Foundation board

PENDLETON — Bobbie Conner has joined the board of the Oregon Community Foundation.

Conner, director of the Tamástslikt Cultural Institute, is one of three new members along with Romy Mortenson of Bend and Peter Nickerson of Portland.

Before moving to Pendleton, Conner worked for the U.S. Small Business Administration and at an Indian nonprofit in Seattle, according to a news release from the foundation. She is enrolled at the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation and is a graduate of Pendleton High School, the University of Oregon and Willamette University. She is also the vice chair of the board of trustees for Eastern Oregon University, and has co-authored multiple books and other published works including the tribal history book "As Days Go By."

The Oregon Community Foundation works with Oregonians to create charitable funds to support community causes such as fighting childhood poverty. The foundation awarded more than \$118 million in grants and scholarships in 2017.

"OCF is enthusiastic about these three engaged and passionate community leaders joining the board of directors," OCF President and CEO Max Williams said in a statement. "We value their commitments to the communities they work and live in and know they will help us with OCF's important work to promote philanthropy and serve communities around the state."



Bobbi Conner

PENDLETON

Work party spruces up Pioneer Park

By **JADE MCDOWELL**
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Pioneer Park in Pendleton is looking shiny and new after a group of volunteers gave it some love on Saturday.

The work party, sponsored by the parks and recreation department, included new paint on the playground, bandstand, fence and signs as well as new bark chips and other small projects.

Kyndra Nelson, who was busy painting the front of the cement bandstand Saturday morning, said she was there because she felt that helping out was a good use of her weekend.

"I just like to volunteer. It's fun," she said.

Kaci Grayber, a Pendleton High School student, was carefully repainting slats on the playground fence nearby. She said the project would help her get needed service hours for National Honor Society, but she also just wanted to help out.

"I remember going to this park as a kid, so it's kind of cool to come out here and make it look nice," she said.

She complimented the adults out painting and raking despite not necessarily using the wooden, cas-



Staff photo by Jade McDowell

Kyndra Nelson, bottom left, Cathy Shermer and Domunik Hull paint the stairs of the bandstand at Pioneer Park in Pendleton during a volunteer work party Saturday.

tile-like playground much themselves.

The wooden playground structure at 400 N.W. Despain Avenue was rebuilt in 2013 after an arsonist burned it down.

Pendleton residents who missed out on the community service project will have another opportunity to help spruce up their community on May 19 with the SURE Spring River Cleanup. SURE — which stands for Stewards of the Umatilla River Environment — is a group of citizens with a goal of keeping the riverway clean. Volunteers will

be working from 9 a.m. to noon on May 19, starting at Stillman Park (413 S.E. Byers Ave. in Pendleton) and working outward, ending with a barbecue lunch at the park. Participants are asked to RSVP on Facebook if possible to help organizers get a count of how many gloves, bags and lunches are needed.

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

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A COMMISSIONER WHO IS DEDICATED, ACCOUNTABLE AND FULLY ENGAGED

What are observers saying about what Commissioner Murdock has brought to Umatilla County in his first full term?

On the subject of energy & commitment:
"He models what he expects from employees - he's among those who open the Courthouse in the morning and among those who close it in the evening - every day."

On the subject of accessibility:
"When I drop by the Commissioner's office, I can count on Commissioner Murdock being there."

On the subject of knowledge & experience:
"It's not easy helping lead 300 employees and balancing an \$80 million budget. Commissioner Murdock came to the position with decades of experience and it shows in the current state of the county."

On the subject of past performance:
"Commissioner Murdock made a positive difference at the Intermountain ESD, the Pasco School District and at the East Oregonian. It shouldn't be a surprise that Umatilla County has benefitted from this experience."

On the subject of making the most of tax dollars:
"Taxpayers don't want public agencies that whine about not having enough money. Rather, they want those in charge to function effectively and efficiently and provide a stable level of programs and services. Commissioner Murdock is the chief budget officer for the county and he is proud of the fact the county balanced next year's budget on February 6."



VOTE GEORGE MURDOCK ON MAY 15 & HELP KEEP UMATILLA COUNTY MOVING FORWARD

Current Umatilla County Commission Board Chair George Murdock has earned a second full term in office

Paid for by Committee to Re-elect George Murdock, County Commissioner. 191 NW Johns Ave., Pendleton, OR 97801