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Staff photo by E.J. Harris

Swimmers pass a 10-pound brick among each other while treading water during a junior lifeguard swim class Monday at the Hermiston Family Aquatic Center.

LIFE SAVERS

Aquatic centers work to prevent drownings with expanded swim lessons

By **JADE MCDOWELL**
East Oregonian

A day at the pool or the beach can be relaxing, but for someone who doesn't know how to swim, it can quickly turn deadly.

That's something the staff of local aquatic centers hope to avoid.

The Hermiston Family Aquatic Center is teaching swim lessons to more than 1,700 people this summer, from toddlers to adults. The adult class is new this year, spurred by a recent drowning death of a Umatilla man who jumped into the Columbia River to save his son despite not knowing how to swim.

"It was heartbreaking," aquatic center manager Kasia Robbins said. "We want to try to prevent it from happening ever again."

The new class, held Tuesday and Thursday evenings at 8:05 p.m., has attracted participants from ages 17 to 57 (the class is open to ages 16 and up). The HFAC is also offering more children's lessons than usual this year and as a result still has slots available. Usually the aquatic center has difficulty finding enough summer staff to meet the demand for lessons, but Robbins said this year they have more staff than ever before.

There are two levels of parent and tot classes, for infants and toddlers to get used



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

Pierce Strong, 10, porpoises out of the water while doing the breast stroke during the junior swim team class Monday at the Hermiston Family Aquatic Center.

to the water, followed by six different levels of 25-minute classes. On Monday morning a mix of skill levels were practicing in different parts of the pool. A handful of very young girls were practicing bouncing up and down in a shallow part of the multi-use pool to keep their heads above water, while in the lap pool small groups of elementary school-aged children used kickboards or swam laps.

"The young kids are learning the water safety aspect, when is it safe to get in the water and how to exit and enter," Robbins

said. "Other kids learn how to stay afloat, how a stroke affects their endurance. It really ranges with age."

On the more advanced end of the spectrum is the hour-long junior lifeguard class, which gives teens a taste of the exercises they would practice to be a lifeguard — potentially lifesaving skills whether they choose to work at a pool next summer or not.

"They're going over training that life-

See SAFETY/8A

PENDLETON

Round-Up to tear down Albertsons, build new retail space

'South campus expansion' will centralize operations, add parking space

By **ANTONIO SIERRA**
East Oregonian

The Pendleton Round-Up will expand southward by tearing down the former Albertsons grocery store and building a new retail and ticketing facility in its former parking lot.

Months of speculation gave way to reality Tuesday as the Round-Up announced the project, which it is deeming the "south campus expansion."

Round-Up President Dave O'Neill said the new 10,000- to 15,000-square-foot building will centralize many of the rodeo's operations and give them more space.

The Round-Up's key needs are for increased retail space with room to store and fill online sales, an independent ticketing area with adequate office space, cohesive administrative offices and convenient space to meet service providers. Revenue from retail and ticketing have risen in recent years, and housing them under one roof is intended to make those processes more efficient.

Randy Thomas, the Round-Up's director of publicity, acknowledged that the way customers purchase tickets has changed, and their ticketing infrastructure needs to as well.

"People used to buy a ticket, buy a hat, and then write a check," he said.

With more and more patrons printing out their tickets at home or even using images on

See RETAIL/8A

MILTON-FREEWATER

Trailer park will connect to city water

Long battle ended by loan for \$457,000 from Business Oregon

By **ANTONIO SIERRA**
East Oregonian

After years of operating without, clean drinking water will eventually return to Milton-Freewater's Locust Mobile Village.

The Milton-Freewater City Council unanimously voted Tuesday to authorize a \$457,000 forgivable loan from the state to connect the trailer park to the city's water system. City Manager Linda Hall said the loan will be converted to a grant as long as the project is finished within three years of the contract being executed.

Inside the urban growth boundary but outside city limits, Locust Mobile Village has been in a protracted battle with the city to gain access to the municipal water system.

In 2015, the trailer park tried to force the city to annex the property into the system until the city lobbied the Oregon Legislature to pass a law that effectively scuttled the move.

A year later, the Oregon Health Authority found a federal grant that would have covered the city's cost of extending water lines, with the Umatilla County Board of Commissioners agreeing to act as the fiscal agent.

But the council unanimously voted to reject extending the utility at that time, saying it wasn't the best use of federal money and was unfair to other properties that had to

See WATER/8A

Scaly to the max

Corbin Maxey, the Reptile Guy, holds a Brazilian rainbow boa constrictor on the end of a stick during a Summer of Scales tour event on Tuesday at the Hermiston Library. Maxey will be performing his animal show Wednesday at Vert Club Room 5 p.m. in Pendleton.



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

