

Hermiston council raises senior taxi ticket prices

By **JADE MCDOWELL**
East Oregonian

Hermiston's taxi tickets for senior and disabled residents will be more expensive in January.

The city council voted Monday to raise the tickets from \$2 to \$2.50. It also raised its subsidy to Umatilla Cab Company, paying the company \$6.75 instead of \$6.60 per ticket redeemed for a ride.

The program, which started in 2007, subsidizes rides for Hermiston residents over age 62 or with a documented disability. Qualifying residents can visit city hall and purchase tickets, which they can use for a one-way taxi ride. The city subsidizes the ride by paying qualifying cab companies an additional \$6.60 (now \$6.75) for each ticket used.

Assistant city manager Mark Morgan said ridership has gone up significantly this year, jumping from 17,500 in 2017 to 18,000 from January through the end of October so far this year. Morgan said that puts the city on pace to subsidize about 23,000 rides by the end of the year, which would put the city over

budget by about \$27,000.

The city had expected ticket sales to decrease after it implemented the HART, a free public bus system, at the beginning of 2017. While ridership of the HART rose from 2,700 rides in 2017 to more than 8,000 so far this year, Morgan said bus riders seem to mostly be residents who don't qualify for the taxi program.

Morgan said Kayak Public Transit, which operates the bus system under contract with the city, is planning to expand the HART's hours of service at the beginning of the year, likely running from about 7 a.m. to 5 p.m.

In order to handle the budget shortfall for the taxi ticket program and accommodate future growth, Morgan recommended raising the taxi ticket price from \$2, where it has been since 2009, to \$2.50. While the increase will cost residents, Morgan also pointed out that the HART remains a free alternative to a taxi ride for those who can't afford the service.

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

ECHO-HERMISTON

Bikers rev up holiday cheer with annual toy run

By **TAMMY MALGESINI**
East Oregonian

A group of leather-clad stand-ins for Santa Claus are gearing up for the 15th annual Echo Toy Run.

The United States Postal Service doesn't have a corner on the market when it comes to making deliveries in inclement weather. Neither snow nor rain or sleet and freezing fog has prevented a group of motorcycle enthusiasts from riding their bikes to take toys to Good Shepherd Medical Center each holiday season.

People are invited to bring new, unwrapped toys and gather Saturday on Echo's Main Street for a noon departure. With toys strapped to his 2004 Harley Wide Glide and an American flag waving in the wind, Al Sells will lead the way to the hospital, 610 N.W. 11th St., Hermiston. Those who don't ride motorcycles can follow at the rear of the pack.

Sells has carried on the tradition started by the former owners of the Echo Saloon. While the Stanfield man might look a little rough around the edges,



File photo

Participants place gifts in bins at Good Shepherd Medical Center during a past Echo Toy Run. In its 15th year, the group will gather Saturday, Dec. 1 in downtown Echo to deliver toys to the hospital in Hermiston.

Kelly Sanders, vice president of human resources at Good Shepherd Health Care System, said Sells and the rest of the bikers that participate annually have hearts of gold.

"They are such giving people," Sanders said. "It's a wonderful thing they do for the children at the hospital and in the community."

The bikers filled one of the hospital's large laundry bins with toys during the event's first year. That

amount has increased three-fold over the years, Sanders said, as well as filling the back of a pickup truck with larger items like bicycles.

The generosity of the bikers lasts well beyond the holiday season. In addition to providing gifts to kids in the hospital during Christmas, toys are available for staff to give to children who might benefit from having their spirits lifted throughout the year. Also, Sanders said they share some with the Herm-

iston Police Department's Christmas Express program and other needy children in the community.

Hospital employees will greet the group when they arrive and offer coffee, hot chocolate and pastries. For more information, call Sells at 541-571-1820 or Nick Bejarano at 541-667-3460.

Contact Community Editor Tammy Malgesini at tmalgesini@eastoregonian.com or 541-564-4539

Elf Run races into the holidays

IRRIGON — The Irrigon High School boys basketball team is bouncing into the holiday season with a 5K fundraiser.

The Elf Run is Saturday, Dec. 22 at 9 a.m. at Irrigon Marina Park. If registered by Saturday, Dec. 15, the fee is \$25, which includes a T-shirt. After that date, the fee increases to \$30.

Free hot chocolate and cookies will be available at the finish line. In addition, medals will be given for the most creative costumes. Also, Santa Claus will be on hand for pictures and will give away candy canes.

For more information or to register, contact Tiffany Locey at tiffany.locey@morrow.k12.or.us or 541-922-5551.

Rudolph fun run in Umatilla

UMATILLA — A costume-themed fun run is set to provide nonperishable food donations for the Umatilla Volunteer Firefighters Association's annual Christmas basket program.

In its second year, the Rudolph Fun Run is also coordinated by the Umatilla High School National Honor Society. The 5K event is Saturday, Dec. 8 from 9-10 a.m. at the McNary Fire Station, 305 Willamette Ave, Umatilla. The entry is five nonperishable food items. Participants will receive water and hot chocolate at the end of the race.

For more information, search Facebook.

Hermiston community choir rings in holiday season

HERMISTON — Area adults and youths have been warming up their voices in preparation for Hermiston's annual holiday concert.

"Peace and Good Will," the Hermiston Community Christmas Concert, is Friday, Dec. 7 at 7 p.m. in the auditorium at Hermiston High School, 600 S. First St. Admission is free. However, representatives from Eastern Oregon Mission will be on hand to accept donations for the nonprofit. The parent organization for Agape House and Martha's House, they serve individuals and families in need.

In its third year, the community choir program is coordinated by Hermiston Parks & Recreation. For more information, call 541-667-5018 or visit www.hermiston.or.us/parks-recreation/home.

Hermiston library friends announce annual meeting

HERMISTON — The annual meeting of the Friends of the Hermiston Public Library will include an awards presentation for the "friend" and volunteer of the year.

In addition, they will elect new officers and dis-

cuss results of the recent book sale. The meeting is Wednesday, Nov. 28 from 6-7 p.m. in the library's Lanham Room, 235 E. Gladys Ave., Hermiston. Light refreshments will be served. The public is welcome to attend and learn more about the organization.

The group holds events and provides support to projects and programs at the library. For more information, call the library at 541-567-2882.

Agape House announces more ways to give

HERMISTON — Eastern Oregon Mission, the parent organization of Agape House and Martha's House, is excited about additional

ways to give as the holidays approach — through Bottle Drop Give and the Amazon Smile Foundation.

A special recyclable bottle and can drive running through Dec. 5 will provide an extra boost to the nonprofit organization. Bottle Drop Give will provide a percentage match depending on the amount of funds raised. Dave Hughes, Eastern Oregon Mission executive director, said their goal is to recycle \$1,000 worth of cans and bottles. If that amount is met, they will receive a 30 percent match through the program, which is coordinated through the Bottle Drop Oregon Redemption Center.

For the special Bottle Drop Give campaign, people are asked to drop off can and bottle donations by

Wednesday, Dec. 5 at Agape House, 500 Harper Road, Hermiston. Also, people can contact Hughes to make arrangements for pick-up service for large amounts.

While doing online shopping at Amazon, people are encouraged to go through <https://smile.amazon.com>. Customers will find the same products, prices and shopping features as the regular Amazon shopping site. The added benefit is

the Amazon Smile Foundation will donate 0.5 percent of the purchase price of eligible purchases to the nonprofit chosen. When logged into smile.amazon.com, be sure to select "Eastern Oregon Mission" before you begin shopping.

For more information about the BottleGive program or to make arrangements for large can and bottle donations, call Hughes at 541-567-8774.

BRIEFLY

DEQ Public Notice
Portland General Electric - Coyote Springs Plant
 Boardman, Oregon
Has applied for an Oregon Title V Operating Permit Renewal

The Department of Environmental Quality is providing an opportunity for public comment. For a copy of the draft permit and review report call Nancy Swofford at 541-633-2021 or call toll free in Oregon at 866-863-6668.

You can also access the draft documents from DEQ's "Public Notices" page at:
www.oregon.gov/deq/Get-Involved/Pages/Public-Notices.aspx

Hermiston

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