Church wraps up holiday spirit

By TAMMY MALGESINI
East Oregonian

EO file photo

Volunteers from the Hermiston Assembly of God Church wrap presents during a 2017 "I Love My City" project. This year's free event is Saturday from 1-3 p.m. at Walmart in Hermiston.

For people who are already tired of the hustle and bustle of the holiday season, help is available.

As part of its "I Love My City" campaign, members of the Hermiston Assembly of God Church will wrap presents free of charge. There are no strings attached, said Rev. Terry Haight, the church's senior pastor.

In its third Christmas season of offering the free service, Haight said people can bring their gifts down and have them wrapped. A number of wrapping stations will be set up Saturday from 1-3 p.m. at Walmart, 1350 N. First St., Hermiston. The tables will be located outside between the store's main entrances.

In addition, Haight said people can enjoy hot chocolate and cookies. The church, he said, is not accepting donations for the effort.

The Assembly of God Church started the "I Love My City" campaign in 2016 as a way to foster healing after the community was impacted by several tragedies. They have been joined by other congregations and continue to perform service projects and activities several times a year.

"We're doing it to be a blessing and to serve our city," Haight said. "We've had people offer money but we say no. And we haven't accepted anything like that."

During the colder months, Haight said it's not really practical to do clean-up efforts or other outdoor projects. The gift-wrapping effort, he said, is a great way to reach out to help others during the busy holiday season.

People are welcome to bring items from home or they can shop at the store and get them wrapped on their way out. Last year, Haight estimates they served approximately 70 families.

"We've had people bring anywhere from two or three gifts to a whole Walmart cartful," he said. "We don't put a limit on it. And it doesn't matter where the gifts come from, we're going to wrap them."

One man, Haight said, was extremely grateful to have 70 presents wrapped last year. Also, after a group of Irrigon Fire Protection District volunteers pitched in to buy Christmas presents for a young man in the community, firefighter Joey Munkers and Lt. Thad Marti went shopping at Walmart. The duo was thrilled to exit the store and find the free gift-wrapping service.

The goal of the effort, Haight said, is to serve the community. He stressed that the project isn't designed to "preach at" people.

"If someone is in need of prayer as the gifts are being wrapped, we offer prayer and encouragement," he said. "That kind of conversation only comes up organically if they bring up a need beyond their gifts."

The church purchases needed supplies from Walmart to provide the service. Wrapping paper, bows and name tags are all included.

Rural child care workers to get pay increase

By AUBREY WIEBER
Oregon Capital Bureau

After years of bargaining, child care providers working in rural Oregon will get double-digit pay raises in the new year.

The union representing them, Service Employees International Union Local 503, said the rural workers will see a 14 percent wage increase, on top of a 5 percent cost-of-living increase to all providers.

The agreement came after negotiations with the state Department of Human Services, which oversees the Employment Related Day Care program. The program provides government-subsidized child care for low-income parents.

"I would characterize it as a huge difference. Every time we have gone to the table, this is something that we have fought for," said Natalie Jackson, a care worker in Ashland who participated in the bargaining. Jackson said she has fought for decent pay for six years.

The pay deal levels out wages across the state. Previously, the state paid three wage scales, depending on whether workers were in urban, metro or rural areas.

"Women who did the same jobs were being paid differently," Jackson said. "To me, it never made sense."

The state now will pay only two scales — one for urban areas and one for the rest of the state.

The union made one of its organizers who worked on the contract available for an interview, but she declined to speak for the record. The organizer didn't know how many caregivers are receiving the pay increase, what the average wage increase would be or whether the lower wages has resulted in fewer child care providers in rural Oregon.

"Raising wages for child care providers helps reduce turnover, and that is critical to improving the quality of care that kids receive," Ben Morris, SEIU 503 spokesman, said in an email. "We're very excited that providers in every part of the state, but especially in rural areas, are going to see a wage increase."

Morris couldn't provide details on how many workers are covered or what the hourly wages are, but did say there are 1,800 workers in the program.

Jackson said child care workers throughout the state were surveyed, with the results showing strong support for increased pay for rural workers. That, she said, made the difference with the state.

Grange cooks up Christmas dinner

HERMISTON—The public is invited to the annual Christmas dinner of the Columbia Grange.

The free event is Sunday at noon at the grange hall, 32339 Diagonal Blvd., Hermiston. The Grange will provide the main meal. Those attending are asked to bring salads or desserts to share.

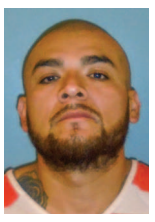
In addition to the meal, there will be donations to several local charities. For more information, call Doris at 541-567-8663 or Diane at 541-567-5922.

MILTON-FREEWATER

Police say man chomped at cop's back during arrest

East Oregonian

Milton-Freewater police reported a man fought officers and tried to bite one before landing in jail.



Corona

Officers at approximately 2 p.m. Tuesday responded to 719 Mill St., Milton-Freewater, on the report of criminal mischief and had probable cause to arrest Agustin Barcenas Corona, 39, on the charge for damaging a vehicle, according to a written statement from Milton-Freewater Police Chief Doug Boedigheimer. Corona, however, had returned to his nearby home.

Police had "adversarial contact" with Corona a few days prior, according to Boedigheimer, so the city police department contacted the Umatilla County Sheriff's Office, which sent a deputy to assist.

Police contacted Corona, who appeared on the property at 719 Mill St. but "refused to voluntarily cooperate in any part of an investigation," Boedigheimer stated, and a standoff ensued for about half an hour before "officers physically engaged Corona, who actively resisted."

The struggle lasted several minutes. Corona tried to bite an officer, Boedigheimer reported, "and produced edged weapons." Officers suffered minor injuries before getting the cuffs on Corona, placing him in a police care and hauling him to the Umatilla County Jail, Pendleton.

Corona faces charges for assaulting a public safety officer, attempted assault of a public safety officer, first-degree criminal mischief (felony vandalism), second-degree criminal mischief (misdemeanor vandalism), resisting arrest, second-degree theft, interfering with a peace officer and second-degree assault. He remains in the jail in lieu of $95,000 bail.

BRIEFLY

Heart-shaped ornaments help patients

HEPPNER — An ornament sale fundraiser provides people with an opportunity to help hospice patients through Morrow County Health District Home Health & Hospice.

The acrylic heart-shaped ornaments can be filled with small goodies, notes, pictures or trinkets. Donations are tax deductible.

The ornaments are available Monday through Fridays from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. at the Home Health & Hospice office, 162 Main St., Heppner. For more information, call 541-676-2946.

Echo announces Giving Tree

ECHO — A Giving Tree in Echo still has names available for people to remove tags and shop for gifts.

The tree is set up at Echo City Hall. The tags have information about needed gift items. People are asked to return the unwrapped gift by Monday, Dec. 17. The gifts will be distributed Wednesday, Dec. 19.

In addition, cash donations will be accepted to help purchase gifts. For more information, call city hall at 541-376-8411.

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CREED II (PG13) 4:00 7:00 10:00
RALPH BREAKS THE INTERNET (PG) 4:50 7:20 9:50
FANTASTIC BEASTS: THE CRIMES OF GRINDELWALD (PG13) 3:40* 6:40 9:40
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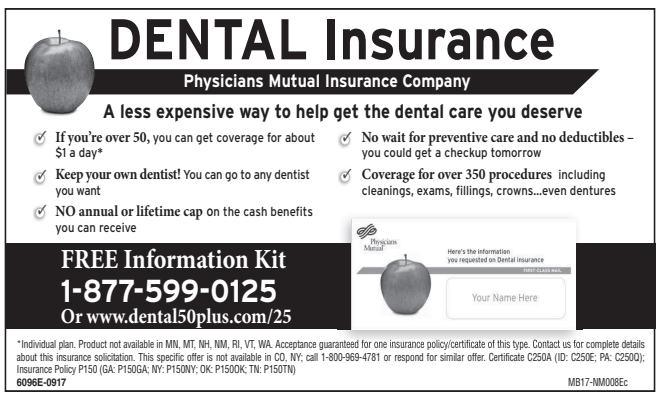

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