

# EAST OREGONIAN

THURSDAY, JANUARY 24, 2019

143rd Year, No. 71

WINNER OF THE 2018 ONPA GENERAL EXCELLENCE AWARD

\$1.50

## BUSTED!



Contributed images by the Blue Mountain Enforcement Narcotics Team. These mug shots represent the majority of the people the Blue Mountain Enforcement Narcotics Team arrested during Operation Wildfire, the recent sweep that targeted local drug houses. The team also seized more than a pound of methamphetamine and three guns in the busts.

### Operation Wildfire aims to 'dry up' drug supply

By PHIL WRIGHT  
*East Oregonian*

The local police task force take-down of drug houses Jan. 16 netted 54 arrests on-site. Pendleton Police Chief Stuart Roberts said the offenders with "dealer amounts" of dope are looking at prison time.

"As you can imagine, most of the folks we're dealing with that day are prior convicted felons," he said.

Many who ended up in handcuffs were targets for selling drugs, Roberts said, but others were offenders with warrants or in possession of drugs when arrest teams knocked on the door.

Operation Wildfire also put new charges on as many as 16 offenders who were in jail or prison and resulted in the seizure of 1.25 pounds of methamphetamine, three guns and a set of brass knuckles, according to information from the Blue Mountain Enforce-

ment Narcotics Team, plus the recovery of a stolen car. Roberts, who oversees the team's board of directors, said the Oregon Department of Human Services was involved in the cases and placed 16 children into protective custody; most went to live with relatives.

The latest big show from BENT involved seven months of investigating drug activity in Umatilla, Morrow

See Wildfire, Page A8

### Closing the gap for graduates

Local districts see rise in graduation rates, but still room for improvement

By JAYATI RAMAKRISHNAN and ANTONIO SIERRA  
*East Oregonian*

The Oregon Department of Education released its 2017-18 graduation rates Thursday morning. Umatilla County's schools all hovered within a few points of the state average, but superintendents say they'll continue to work toward improved performance for all students.

Hermiston saw a large jump from last year, and now sits at 74.2 percent for their four-year graduation rate. Last year, the district's graduation rate was 8.4 points lower, at 65.82 percent.

The number is still a few points below the state's average of 78.68, but Hermiston Superintendent Tricia Mooney said the district is pleased with the growth. But she said they didn't want to just focus on graduation numbers.

"There are two numbers we were really looking at," Mooney said. "The four-year cohort graduation rate, and the four-year cohort completion rate."

Mooney said the completion rate looks at students who received a GED or an extended diploma. The completer rate for 2017-18 was 87.47, five points above the state's four-year completion rate of 82.53.

She said the work of students and staff showed in the improved graduation rates, but she was also excited about the above-average completion rate.

"That's still important to me, because the students who left are still prepared for what they're going to do next," she said.

Mooney said there is still work to do, but they plan to focus even more on tactics they've already implemented.

She said the hiring of graduation coach Omar Medina has been one positive change, as well as collecting data to help them figure out where students need more help.

See Gap, Page A8

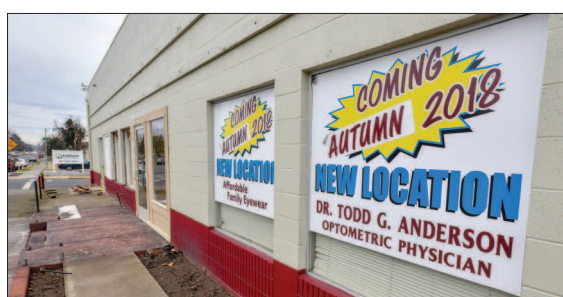


Staff photo by Kathy Aney, File. Shaw Jerome stands to be recognized for winning the Don Requa Memorial Scholarship during the 2018 Pendleton High School commencement exercises at the Round-Up Grounds.

### Construction delays vex Hermiston businesses

Staff photo by E.J. Harris

A sign advertising an autumn 2018 opening sits in the window at the new location for the Affordable Family Eyewear on Tuesday in Hermiston.



By JADE MCDOWELL  
*East Oregonian*

When someone announces a timeline for a large construction project, it's not a bad idea to take the number of months and double it. Maybe triple it.

It is possible, of course, to finish on time. But a look at many publicly

announced projects in the Hermiston area shows delays of six to 12 months have been common.

Sometimes it's a problem getting financing. Other times it's a shortage of subcontractors, or an unexpectedly early start to winter weather.

See Delays, Page A8



CHI St. Anthony Hospital Family Clinic is recognized as a Patient-Centered Primary Care Home.

#### What does that mean for you?

- Better-coordinated care.
- Listening to your concerns and answering questions.
- After-hours nurse consultation.
- Healthcare providers who will help connect you with the care you need in a safe and timely way.
- Healthcare providers who play an active role in your health.

CHI St. Anthony Hospital

844.724.8632

3001 St. Anthony Way, Pendleton  
WWW.SAHPENDLETON.ORG

Mon through Thurs, 8 a.m. to 7 p.m. • Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.,  
Sat and Sun, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.,  
Walk-ins are welcome but appointments are preferred.

