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WINNER OF THE 2018 ONPA GENERAL EXCELLENCE AWARD

\$1.50

HOOPS AND HOSPITALITY



Staff photo by Kathy Aney

The Moriarty family traveled from their home in Idaho for the Best of the West AAU basketball tournament. They took a break for lunch Saturday at Subway in Hermiston. Parker, 11, (in red) and Cooper, 8, play on different Idaho Elite teams.

Hermiston economy scores big with AAU tournament

By TAMMY MALGESINI
East Oregonian

AAU youth basketball coaches weren't the only ones going to their benches during the 16th annual Best of the West tournament.

With an estimated influx of 4,000 people in Hermiston over the weekend, area businesses changed their regular game plans to help accommodate lodging and meal options for teams.

"When we have these teams coming in, we will bring in some extra housekeepers," said Ryan Lynch, general manager of Comfort Inn & Suites. "We give them a pretty good rate and we'll change our breakfast hours if they have morning games."

Hermiston High School athletic director Larry Usher, who helps coordinate the event with the Hermiston Youth Basketball Club, said the Jan. 26-27 tournament featured 119 teams. In addition to duffle bags and basketball shoes, people coming to town open their wallets, he said.

Although a specific economic impact study hasn't been conducted on the Hermiston Youth Basketball Club tournaments, Usher said similar cities have estimated an average of \$100 is spent per person.

"I think that's a very conservative number," Usher said. "With at least one night in a hotel, 5-7 meals, a tank of gas and snacks — that adds up in a hurry."

Usher said in addition to local teams, people travel from the Tri-Cities, Seat-



Staff photo by Kathy Aney

Teams from Boise, Idaho, and Richland, Washington, battle it out Saturday in the Sunset Elementary School gymnasium. The teams came to town for the Best of the West AAU basketball tournament, which used gyms in Hermiston, Echo and Stanfield and brought an estimated 4,000 people and a \$400,000 boost to the local economy.

"I THINK THE WORD IS OUT WHEN IT'S TOURNAMENT WEEKEND, DON'T GO OUT TO LUNCH OR DINNER. IT WILL BE HARD TO FIND A TABLE."

Larry Usher,

Hermiston High School athletic director who helps coordinate the tournament

tle, Portland, Yakima, Seattle, Spokane and Idaho, including 20 teams from the Boise area. The infrastructure, including adequate hotel space and restaurants, is important to the success of the tournament, Usher said. Although they haven't outgrown available hotel space,

he said locals do feel the impact during tournament weekends.

"I think the word is out when it's tournament weekend, don't go out to lunch or dinner," Usher said. "It will be

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Starnes crusades for campaign finance reform

Independent candidate dropped out of governor's race with Brown's promise to pursue goals

By PARIS ACHEN
Oregon Capital Bureau

Patrick Starnes, former candidate for governor, earns a living now as a carpenter renovating an 1878 house in Brownsville.

In his spare time, he is working to remodel Oregon's campaign finance laws to cut the influence of major donors.

Limiting campaign money was a primary plank for Starnes as he campaigned for governor last year as the candidate of the Independent Party of Oregon. He took no more than \$100 from any single donor though Oregon law would have allowed him to take checks of any size.



Starnes

Shortly before the election, he dropped out in a deal with Democratic Gov. Kate Brown, getting from her promise to champion campaign finance limits in the 2019 Legislature.

He means to hold her to that promise and is continuing his one-man campaign for reform.

He calls on the governor's office regularly to check on campaign finance proposals. He's been assigned a point person in the Governor's Office, executive assistant Jack Polales, to meet with weekly.

"The commitment is important to see it through rather than getting the promises from everyone," Starnes said.

He also shows up at legislators' offices, sometimes unannounced, with a bright smile on his face and a ready speech on why there should be controls on how much donors can spend on political campaigns.

On Wednesday, for instance, he met individually with Sens. Ginny Burdick, Fred Girod, Tim Knopp and Floyd Prozanski.

"Since I am new to the Capitol, it is more introductory," Starnes said Friday. "If you haven't heard about me, this is who I am, and this is what I campaigned on. I want to hear from them mostly what their questions are and what their solutions are."

Some legislators have already agreed to support a constitutional amendment needed to make limits legal.

"Some lawmakers aren't interested in it and don't think it's a big issue," Starnes said.

His dream is to limit campaign contributions to \$1,000 for individuals and political action committees each election cycle.

In 1997, the Oregon Supreme Court ruled that such limits violated Oregonians' constitutional right to free speech, but voters could authorize the caps by approving an amendment.

Legislators in each chamber have proposed separate referrals to voters revising different parts of the Constitution. The legislation would let voters decide whether to allow caps but proposes no specific limit.

Currently, donors can give as much as they want.

For instance, former Nike CEO Phil Knight contributed \$2.5 million to the campaign of state Rep. Knute Buehler, the Republican nominee challenging Brown. Knight contributed another \$1 million to the Republican Governors Association, which itself

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Dorrans will lead county fair parade

New court unveiled, other volunteers recognized for service

By TAMMY MALGESINI
East Oregonian

With a theme of "Strong Roots & Cowboy Boots!," the Umatilla County Fair Board is already cultivating people and plans for the Aug. 6-10, 2019 event.

Dan and Terri Dorrans of Hermiston were introduced as the 2019 grand marshals during Saturday night's Fair Appreciation Dinner at Eastern Oregon Trade and Event Center. After serving for two decades, Dan stepped down from the fair board at the end of 2017.

A Hermiston native, Dan said his family have been longtime supporters of the fair. His grandfather first put him to work cleaning up stalls at the fairgrounds when he was 7 years old.

Serving on the fair board isn't an honorary or ceremonial title, Dan said, it's hands on and a lot of hard work. And, he's quick to point out that it's the sponsors, partnerships and people that contribute to the success of the Umatilla County Fair.

While Terri downplayed her role, Don Miller, who introduced the Dorrans, said over the years she has taken care of many last minute details and sometimes interesting requests.



Staff photo by Tammy Malgesini

Dan and Terri Dorrans of Hermiston are all smiles after being introduced as grand marshals of the 2019 Umatilla County Fair. The announcement was made Saturday during the Fair Appreciation Dinner at Eastern Oregon Trade & Event Center.

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