

New vehicle boosts sheriff's office rescue abilities

Utility task vehicle arrived Monday to the sheriff's office in Pendleton

By PHIL WRIGHT
East Oregonian

PENDLETON — The Umatilla County Sheriff's Office has a new tool for responding to major crises. County emergency manager Tom Roberts said the Polaris Ranger Crew XP 1000 EPS Northstar HVAC Edition fills a critical gap for the sheriff's office.

The utility task vehicle arrived Monday to the sheriff's office in Pendleton. Roberts said it can transport six people in the cab plus has a seat and stretcher in the exterior bed for a patient care provider and someone who is immobile. The rig is for off-road work and runs on snow tracks for winter. Sheriff Terry Rowan said



Photo contributed by the Umatilla County Sheriff's Office
Umatilla County Sheriff Terry Rowan shows the sheriff's office's latest big equipment acquisition — a new utility task vehicle capable of rescues over rugged terrain and rough conditions.

this was a solid acquisition for the sheriff's office. The patrol division has a similar vehicle for working in off-highway vehicle parks,

state parks and the like, he said, but without the capability to transport medics and patients. Roberts said the need for

this kind of vehicle became apparent on Dec. 31, 2012, when a tour bus carrying dozens of passengers crashed and plummeted

down a mountainside near Dead Man Pass on Interstate 84 east of Pendleton. Nine people died in that wreck, and 39 suffered injuries, many serious.

"We had to bring in a similar vehicle from Walla Walla to assist with that episode," Roberts said. Since then the emergency management department has worked to get a UTV of its own, seeking funds from the Homeland Security Grant Program under the Federal Emergency Management Agency. The grant program plays an important role in FEMA's National Preparedness System, funding preparedness activities from emergency planning to training to equipment purchases.

"We were finally awarded \$48,838 for the procurement of this unit," Roberts said. The funds also will go toward buying a trailer to transport it. Rowan said the grants

are not easy to win because they are so competitive. Agencies across the county apply for funds to enhance their ability to respond to emergencies.

"We're just thankful this go-round we had a compelling enough application to get funding," he said.

The sheriff's office will house the vehicle with other equipment for the search and rescue team, and the team will oversee the use of the Polaris. Roberts said he anticipates the team will have ample opportunity to use the UTV. The team each year, particularly during the winter, hustles to mountain areas to help lost hunters and the like.

The sheriff's office aims to have the UTV ready soon, and Rowan said the public can expect to see it working in August at the Umatilla County Fair, where medical teams will put it use taking patients to ambulances if the need arises.

Truck fire breaks out at local auto shop



Pendleton Fire Department Capt. Steve Brost (left) and Lt. Jeff Perry work to battle an engine fire in a Ford Ranger pickup truck at The Shop, located at 238 S.W. Court Ave. According to mechanics on scene, the driver of the vehicle pulled in complaining that the truck was overheating and may need repair before it burst into flames in the parking lot. The exact cause of the fire is still under investigation.
Staff photo by Ben Lonergan

Hermiston School District wins financial accountability award

By JESSICA POLLARD
East Oregonian

HERMISTON — Hermiston School District recently received the Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting from the Government Finance Officers Association for the 12th year in a row.

The certificate was issued for the Comprehensive Annual Financial Report for the fiscal year that ended June 30, 2018.

Public entities can elect to submit their financial information to the GFOA to seek review and become eligible for the certificate, which is the highest recognition for government accounting and reporting, according to a press release from the Hermiston School District.

"While this is an award that looks at just one financial document, it's really a

culmination of the entire school and fiscal year," said Director of Business Services Katie Saul. "Not just the business office, but the entire district. Everybody within the district takes financial responsibility very seriously."

The CAFR Program, established in 1945, assesses transparency and disclosure, rather than financial health. Last year's results named over 4,000 different public entities nationwide that won the certificate.

The district's financial reports, debt management practices, per-student funding, and reimbursed spending were some of the metrics used to examine how money was used and recorded for the 2017-18 fiscal year.

Saul said that the metrics make it easier for HSD to compare its expenditures to that of other school districts

in the area. Saul has been working at HSD since 2009, and has been the director of business services since 2016.

"Saul and her team are responsive and make sure everyone is engaged, which fosters a culture of accountability," Superintendent Tricia Mooney said in a recent press release.

The district first submitted to the GFOA after the 2004-05 school year, and has won the award 13 times total.

The GFOA, a national organization, was founded in 1906 and aims to "advance excellence" in public finance. The organization provides best practices guidance and consulting for public finance officials in the United States and Canada.

"It just really goes to show the consistency of the district being mindful of the taxpayers' funds," Saul said.

BRIEFLY

Walmart hiring 30 new truck drivers in Hermiston

HERMISTON — Walmart is hiring 130 new truck drivers in the Pacific Northwest, and Hermiston is landing 30 of those jobs.

The company's Hermiston transportation office serves the Hermiston Walmart Distribution Center and other centers and stores around the Pacific Northwest.

Walmart also recently announced a pay increase for all drivers, meaning the new drivers can earn an all-in rate of nearly 89 cents a mile, adding up to as much as \$87,500 in their first year.

Those interested in applying can visit drive4walmart.com.

Construction to close part of Hermiston Avenue

HERMISTON — Construction work on Hermiston Avenue will disrupt traffic over the next couple of months in Hermiston.

The city will be working on replacing underground utilities and then repaving between Southwest Third Street and Southwest 10th Street between July 22 and end of the month.

The street will be completely open for the Umatilla

County Fair Parade on Aug. 3 and throughout the following week for the fair. Afterward, according to the city, Hermiston Avenue will be completely closed between South First Place and Southwest Third Street for "several weeks" to fully rebuild the street and sidewalks.

Businesses in the area of the closure will remain open, with parking on side streets and behind buildings.

For more information contact city hall at 541-567-5521.

Greater Hermiston Community Foundation looks forward to giving

By JADE MCDOWELL
East Oregonian

HERMISTON — When the Greater Hermiston Community Foundation started a little more than a year ago, its founders weren't sure how long it would take before they could start the fun part: giving away money.

That part is almost here. The foundation plans to take applications this fall and award its first grants in early 2020 after hitting the \$200,000 mark earlier this year.

"That was a huge milestone," vice-chair Nate Rivera said. "We were thrilled to reach that goal in that timeline."

The Greater Hermiston Community Foundation is a 501(c)(3) charity started by Hermiston residents who wanted to help people give back to the community in a lasting way. The foundation's main component is an endowment fund, where money will be held in trust and the interest earned from the fund will perpetually generate money for community projects.

The GHCF will also be able to open separate accounts to collect direct donations for specific projects. For example,

once the city of Hermiston is ready to actively solicit donations for the rebuild of Funland Playground, the foundation will collect tax-exempt donations and pass 100% of the money on to the city. The account will be an option for large corporations and others that have policies against giving directly to cities to avoid a conflict of interest.

Board treasurer Dennis Barnett said those involved in the foundation made the commitment to donate time, website costs, printing and all other overhead costs in-kind instead of using money from donations.

"There's not a dollar of administration in this," he said. "No overhead."

Barnett said in addition to donations the foundation has in hand, a few of Hermiston's more well-off current and former residents have also written the foundation into their

will. He said the time for a bequeathment opportunity like the GHCF is ripe, given the timeline of how the city has grown.

"We will have a lot of wealth that will be transitioning for the first time in Hermiston," he said.

While there are local foundations that focus on specific areas, such as health or education, the Greater Hermiston Foundation will be more broad in scope. Rivera said they will be looking more toward brick-and-mortar projects than events to make the most impact in the greater Hermiston area.


"We have a lot of flexibility in what we can fund," he said.

The board will come up with an application form and list of criteria this fall, then award its first grant in early 2020. Their next fundraising goal is to take the endowment fund up to \$500,000.

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