

Hermiston celebrated Day of the Dead on Friday night

By JESSICA POLLARD
East Oregonian

HERMISTON — The sound of music and laughter from dozens of families filled the main commons of Hermiston High School Friday night in celebration of Día de los Muertos — Day of the Dead.

The event was put together by the high school's newly established club, Juntos — which translates to “together” in Spanish.

“It’s important for people to come together and celebrate those that have passed,” said Michelle Sanguino, 17, who is part of Juntos.

“And for families to feel comfortable,” added Susie Amzo, 16, who is also a part

of the club.

Sanguino said some people in the community may feel reluctant to come out to celebrate the holiday, which is celebrated from Oct. 31 to Nov. 2.

“This is a good way for parents in the Hispanic community to get involved,” she added. “And many of them haven’t seen (Day of the Dead) in schools since they went to school.”

Amzo and Sanguino are two of seven students that hold leadership positions in Juntos. The club aims to promote Latino student leadership, as well as cultural events.

Day of the Dead is an Aztec holiday celebrated across Latin America that highlights the lives of loved ones, both



Staff photo by Jessica Pollard
Susie Amzo, 16, left, and Michelle Sanguino, 17, helped organize Hermiston High School’s first Day of the Dead event.

those who have passed and who are alive, according to club advisers Omar Medina and Cristina Cuevas.

The event provided live music throughout the night. Volunteers, some from the high school’s Advanced

Placement art classes, provided free skull face-painting. Many skull designs for Day of the Dead are modeled after the iconic La Catrina and feature bright colors.

Originally illustrated by Mexican engraver José Guadalupe Posada in the 1910s, La Catrina is a high-society skeleton woman. The point of the illustration, according to New York Latin Culture Magazine, is to show that in death, everyone — rich and poor — is equal.

Areahi Galvan, 8, chose blue accents for her face paint. “That’s my favorite color,” she said.

She added that her favorite part of the celebration was the cookie decorating.

Blank sugar cookies acted

as canvases for the array of colored frostings available to attendees, but Mexican cuisine and a variety of agua frescas were also available for purchase throughout the event.

Toward the end of the night, organizers hung a piñata from the banister of the school’s second story.

The main floor of the high school transformed into a candy bonanza as each child got the chance to hit the piñata three times, until it exploded across the floor.

Sanguino said Juntos is already planning its next big event — a big Cinco de Mayo dance for students, which will take place around the same time as the Hermiston High School prom.

Mystery boom jolts Athena residents

Blown transformer not to blame

By KATHY ANEY
East Oregonian

ATHENA — Athena is generally a quiet place.

No four-lane freeways skirt the town of 1,100 people. The residents aren’t bothered by low-flying jetliners or trains blasting by.

Still, sometime between 1:30 a.m. and 2 a.m. on Sunday, according to some residents, a thunderous boom jolted them from slumber.

“It was a loud boom that lasted a long time and rattled the walls,” said Crystal McKee, who lives near the center of town.

“It sounded like they were lighting off dynamite in the

park,” said Jason Martinez. He lives across the street from Athena City Park, which sits at the southern edge of town.

The noise shook both from deep sleep.

Many of the people who messaged the *East Oregonian* or posted to the Athena-Weston News Facebook group also were jolted awake. Some mentioned pets experiencing distress.

“My dog was barking, cat running, woke me outta sound sleep,” wrote one Facebooker. “Heck of an explosion.”

One person initially thought a car had crashed into her house. Others said the concussion shook windows and doors. Someone from Weston heard it too — and another on Weston Moun-

tain. One speculated about a massive crater nearby.

Others heard nothing. The next morning, City Recorder Nancy Barker said she hadn’t heard a thing. Neither had the two women waiting on customers at the Sugar Shack on Main Street.

Some on social media speculated that a transformer could have blown, since when a transformer fails, it sometimes results in a loud boom. However, Pacific Power spokeswoman Lori Wyman said no power interruptions happened that morning.

“The only thing we know of in that area was a structure fire around 9 p.m.,” Wyman said.

The electrical fire in a manufactured home at 353 S. Third St. in Athena started

around 8:41 p.m. on Sunday, according to East Umatilla Fire and Rescue’s Dave Baty. The department received nary a call about any earlier explosion, though. Neither did the Umatilla County Sheriff’s Office.

United States Geological Survey maps showed no earthquakes in the area that could have caused the sound. A large canning operation near Athena wasn’t to blame either, according to a spokesman.

So what’s left? Sonic jets? A falling meteor? Alien invaders? Such mysterious booms have baffled other communities in the U.S., most recently in Rhode Island and Ohio.

At least for now, the origin of the explosion noise in Athena remains a mystery.

Walker’s Farm Kitchen restaurant closes doors

By JADE MCDOWELL
East Oregonian

HERMISTON — Walker’s Farm Kitchen has closed its doors for good.

The Hermiston restaurant first announced on Facebook that it would be closed Oct. 21-Nov. 4, and then on Sunday posted an announcement that the restaurant was permanently closed, effective immediately.

Larry and Cynthia Walker opened the farm-to-table restaurant in February 2013, serving up seasonally fresh, locally sourced dishes advertised as “an upscale menu without pretensions.”

They garnered a steady flow of high praise on review websites, such as Yelp, often from out-of-town customers who expressed surprise at finding such a “diamond in the rough” in Hermiston.

“Best meal out I’ve had in over a year, who would have thought that would happen in Hermiston,” Nicole M. of Beaverton

wrote on Yelp in August.

The rave reviews weren’t enough to keep the lights on at the restaurant, however. The Walkers wrote on Sunday that in the past three years a busy night had become the exception rather than the rule.

“The chalkboard marquee lights up one last time with tears and a heavy heart as we deliver this message to you, and it is not a decision we made lightly or freely, but a decision forced upon us by declining revenues to the point where it became impossible to keep the doors open,” they wrote.

Larry Walker declined to comment further when contacted, but the long Facebook message Sunday expressed gratitude for customers and staff who had played a part in the Walker’s Farm Kitchen journey over the years, in some cases becoming close friends.

“Regardless of who you are, we enjoyed your company every time you stepped through the doorway,” the Walkers wrote.

Weston crash injures one

WESTON — A single-vehicle crash occurred Sunday morning on Highway 204 near Milepost 19, injuring the driver.

Oregon State Police reported that after 10 a.m. Sunday, a black Kia Amanti, driven by Virginia Ruth Fox, 59, failed to negotiate a curve in the road outside the Alpine Outpost Tollgate Store.

The vehicle was headed eastbound and left the roadway on the north side, hitting a road sign. The vehicle crossed McIntyre Road and crashed into trees on the side of the roadway.

Fox was removed from the vehicle and LifeFlighted to Providence St. Mary Medical Center in Walla Walla, Wash.

No citations were issued as a result of the crash, according to OSP Captain Timothy Fox. It is unknown if Fox has been released from the hospital yet.

Hermiston man gets 7 years for domestic violence

HERMISTON — Jason Eugene Dungan of Hermiston is going to prison for more than seven years after pleading guilty to crimes of domestic violence.

Hermiston police the night of Feb. 21 responded to a domestic disturbance on Northwest 13th Street and

BRIEFLY

found a 47-year-old woman on the ground and suffering multiple injuries. An emergency aircraft flew her to a Portland hospital. The ensuing investigation resulted in Dungan’s arrest.

The Umatilla County District Attorney’s Office charged him with 12 counts — five misdemeanors and seven felonies, including first-degree assault and attempted murder constituting domestic violence.

Dungan, 39, signed a plea deal on Oct. 18, admitting he was guilty of six crimes. The most serious was second-degree assault, which carries a mandatory minimum sentence of five years, 10 months. State court records show Circuit Judge Christopher Brauer sentenced Dungan to a total of seven-and-a-half years in prison for the assault and related crimes.

Dungan is at the state’s intake center for new prison inmates at Coffee Creek Correctional Facility, Wilsonville.

Stagnant air sticking around

PENDLETON — The National Weather Service extended its air stagnation advisory for the region through Wednesday at 4 p.m.

The federal agency’s office in Pendleton released the

advisory during the weekend, covering much of Umatilla and Morrow counties as well as nearby areas in Washington and through the Columbia River Gorge. Marc Austin, meteorologist with the National Weather Service in Pendleton, said the extension came after checking with state and regional partners.

“It’s just looking like this weather pattern is going to hold into the weekend,” he said.

While temperatures fell to below freezing last week, a high pressure system along the Oregon and California coasts brought warmer air. But that air also sinks, pushing down pollutants, Austin explained, which prevents the natural escape process for pollutants, and thus a haze is visible over areas such as Pendleton.

The poor air quality may cause issues for people with respiratory problems. The air stagnation advisory indicates pollution levels will increase during this period due to lack of air movement.

Air quality agencies recommend not to burn outdoors during the stagnation and limit residential wood-burning as much as possible. People should check with their local burn agencies for restrictions in

their specific areas.

Austin said the Pendleton office will continue to monitor the conditions and adjust the advisory as needed.

— *East Oregonian staff and wire reports*

November 8-9-10, 2019

Custer's 24th Annual Christmas

ARTS & CRAFTS SHOW

OVER 150 NORTHWEST ARTISANS
FINE ART | HAND CRAFT | SPECIALTY FOODS

HAPO Center
Pasco, WA
FREE PARKING

Friday 10AM–8PM
Saturday 9AM–6PM
Sunday 10AM–4PM

Admission \$7 | Kids 12 and under free!

CusterShows.com 509.924.0588

HealthyMC.org

MORROW COUNTY HEALTH DISTRICT
Excellence in Healthcare

WELCOME ABOARD

Meet & Greet

David Collins, PA-C
Irrigon Medical Clinic
Since 2019

Join us
Join us for refreshments and to meet David Collins, PA-C and everyone caring for you at Irrigon Medical Clinic.

Tuesday
November 19, 2019
3:30p.m. - 6:00p.m.

Irrigon Medical Clinic
220 N. Main Street
Irrigon, OR 97844
541-922-5880

Where healthier is happening...

Boardman | Heppner | Ione | Irrigon | Lexington 541-676-9133

WILDHORSE
RESORT & CASINO

11/5
Cineplex Show Times

\$5 Classic Movie
Showing Wednesday @ 12p
Some Like it Hot

Terminator: Dark Fate (R)
4:10p 7:00p 9:50p

Arctic Dogs (PG)
4:30p 6:50p 9:10p

Maleficent:
Mistress of Evil (PG)
4:00p 6:40p 9:30p

Zombieland: Double Tap (R)
4:40p 7:20p 9:40p

Joker (R)
4:20p 7:10p 10:00p

* Matinee Pricing
wildhorseresort.com • 541-966-1850
Pendleton, OR I-84 - Exit 216