

Community garden stalled by COVID-19

By JADE MCDOWELL
East Oregonian

HERMISTON — As the list of things Oregonians can still do while preventing the spread of COVID-19 shrinks, gardening could be a good way to safely spend time out of the house.

For now, gardeners in Hermiston will have to use their own yards instead of the Lovin’ Spadefuls Community Garden, but they’re hopeful that might change later in the season.

Chelle Hankinson, the garden’s facilitator, said no one is allowed on the site because it is located on Good Shepherd Health Care System’s hospital campus, and access to the campus is tightly restricted at the moment. There were also concerns about whether proper social distancing could be maintained if too many people were in the garden area at once.

“Right now we’re going with what the hospital is asking us to do,” she said. “It’s their site and their property, and we want to respect that.”

The community garden’s season usually starts May 1. Hankinson said activity might not be able to



A tomato hangs from a vine at the Lovin’ Spadefuls Community Garden in Hermiston in 2019.

return to the garden quite that soon, but there are plenty of plants that would do well after being planted in June or July.

“The good thing about gardening is you can start any time,” she said.

The garden’s spring class had a record-breaking 28 participants before the last two classes were canceled. Hankinson said she sent home free seeds with participants, and has been

dropping off other seeds to others who have decided to start a garden at home while they physically isolate at their residence.

Lovin’ Spadefuls had to postpone some activities, such as a plan for FFA students to install drip lines, but Head Start recently donated a green house that they will be able to install on site at some point.

For those who are looking to start a garden, master

gardeners have been posting tips, articles and videos to the OSU (Oregon) Master Gardener Facebook page.

Because of a sudden surge in interest in learning how to garden, OSU is making its online Vegetable Gardening course available for free through the end of April at workspace.oregonstate.edu/course/master-gardener-series-vegetable-gardening.

BRIEFLY

Kayak Public Transit closure continues 1 week

MISSION — The Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Reservation announced on Friday afternoon that its closure of Kayak Public Transit would last for another week.

A press release from the tribes said the closure would remain in place through Saturday, April 4, the release said, adding the board will monitor the situation and make a determination by Friday, April 3, concerning the following week.

The closure — in response to COVID-19 — started on Monday, March 23.

“Kayak recognizes its role as a lifeline for access to employment, medical and shopping needs throughout the region and we do not take this action lightly,” the release said.

Kayak Public Transit operates three fixed routes and four commuter bus services in Southeastern Washington and Northeastern Oregon, including La Grande, Hermiston and Walla Walla, Washington.

Spring Cleanup week canceled

HERMISTON — Sanitary Disposal has postponed its annual Spring Cleanup week in light of COVID-19.

The Hermiston transfer station had planned to offer free and discounted load drop-offs April 1-7 but is canceling it for now and will reschedule sometime in the future.

Hermiston library suspending curbside pickups

HERMISTON — The Hermiston Public Library is suspending its curbside service for now.

After the library closed

to the public, staff has still been offering the option to call for a book and pick it up. On Friday, the library announced in a news release it is ending that practice at 5 p.m. Saturday and the duration of the suspension will be “be determined based on direction from state and federal authorities.”

“We look forward to being able to welcome everyone back to the library without the worry of safety,” library director Mark Rose said.

Online services, such as audio books and e-books, are still available at hermiston-library.us. For more information, call 541-567-2882.

Workers final checks owed in full

SALEM — The Oregon Bureau of Labor and Industries sent out a reminder Friday that amid business closures and layoffs, employees are still owed their wages.

“If you are laid off, you must receive all of the wages you have earned by your next regularly scheduled payday after layoff,” the bureau said in a statement. “If your employer has a policy of paying out vacation time, you must receive it in full at that time as well.”

BOLI said employees who believe they have not been paid in full should keep documents, such as pay stubs and work schedules, and can make a claim online or email whdscreeener@boli.state.or.us.

“I want to be clear: this is not a moment for employers to take advantage of workers or violate civil rights,” Labor Commissioner Val Hoyle said in a statement. “Using a crisis to harm employees is unacceptable and I will use the full weight of my office to prevent and remedy those efforts.”

Workers can get up to \$10,000 back in unpaid wages, BOLI said.

— EO Media Group

Lifeways offering telemedicine

By JADE MCDOWELL
East Oregonian

UMATILLA COUNTY — As businesses scramble to make as many services as possible available online, Lifeways is no exception.

The community mental health provider is offering appointments via telephone and telehealth technology, to make sure people can still talk to a therapist or receive other mental health services even if they are sick or isolating themselves at home. As an “essential service,” Lifeways staff also continue to provide services in residential and hospital settings, emergency rooms, out in the community and in their offices.

“At the same time, we are following CDC and Public Health guidance on social distancing, health monitoring, cleaning and (personal protective equip-



EO file photo

Lifeways is now offering appointments via telephone and telehealth technology to ensure that people can still receive mental health services even if they are isolating themselves at home.

ment) use,” Chief Operating Officer Liz Johnson wrote in an email.

She said they have “garnered strength” from increased support and communication from their community partners, and are conducting an organizational-wide effort to monitor the situ-

ation daily and continue to make adjustments to meet demand.

Lifeways has also introduced a support line that people can call to relieve feelings of loneliness and isolation during this time when many people can’t physically visit friends and family.

The most valuable and respected source of local news, advertising and information for our communities.

eomedia group

www.eomediagroup.com

Thank You for

75 YEARS.

Our Open House is postponed and we'll have it later this year!

Stay healthy everyone.

9 AM-5 PM MONDAY-FRIDAY

ATHENA

310 Main Street • 541-566-7333

DEPOSIT-TAKING ATM / NIGHT DEPOSITORY

Bank of Eastern Oregon

75 Years SINCE 1945

Member FDIC

TOYOTA

We're here for you.

A family of four (father, mother, and two children) walking away from the camera down a long, straight, paved road that stretches into the distance under a clear sky.

Your local Toyota Dealerships are open to serve you.

A collection of Toyota vehicles including a red pickup truck, a white SUV, a blue SUV, and a red sedan.

BuyAToyota.com

ToyotaCare*

TOYOTA Financial Services

Prototypes shown with options. Extra-cost color shown.
*ToyotaCare Covers normal factory scheduled service for 2 years or 25,000 miles, whichever comes first.
See Toyota dealer for details and exclusions.