

Hermiston Chamber moving to a new building

By **JADE MCDOWELL**
East Oregonian

HERMISTON — The Hermiston Chamber of Commerce is moving to a larger building.

The chamber announced on Friday, April 2, it has purchased the former Pioneer Title building at 630 S. Highway 395, across from the Rodeway Inn. Chamber staff will move into the building after remodeling is complete.

New Chamber CEO Kristina Olivas said in the news release that the building, which is larger than the chamber's current offices, will be a "multifunctional" space available for community use.

"It's an exciting time

for our community and our Chamber, and we are stepping forward to respond to our growing member and community needs," she said.

For about two decades, the chamber was located in the Hermiston Community Center, which chamber staff managed under a contract with the city of Hermiston. But in January 2018, the city ended its contract with the chamber and moved its own parks and recreation offices into the center. The chamber then moved into a small office space at the Cornerstone Plaza across from Safeway.

Three months later, the chamber received a \$1 million allocation from the state to build a new work-force development center



Jade McDowell/East Oregonian

The Hermiston Chamber of Commerce has purchased the former Pioneer Title building at 630 S. Highway 395.

and offices. It purchased property for the new building on the corner of South Highway 395 and Evelyn Avenue, across from New Hope Community Church,

and has drafted plans for the new building. But the \$1 million won't completely cover the cost of the new building, according to the news release, and the fundraising drive planned for 2020 was put on hold during the pandemic in recognition of the struggles local businesses were facing.

Chamber President Annette Kirkpatrick said long-term plans to build the center on Evelyn Avenue haven't changed. But while the chamber waits on the new building, the former Pioneer Title building will help staff start providing work-force training and meeting space now. Kirkpatrick said the state gave the chamber permission to use part of its \$1 million grant to purchase

the Pioneer Title building.

"We are excited that we can now provide the work-force training and meeting space that was key to receiving our \$1 million state grant," she said. "This facility will help meet that need."

As the chamber prepares for fundraising efforts, it has also subdivided the 2.4-acre lot on Evelyn Avenue to create two additional commercial lots it hopes to sell to generate more funding for the project. According to the news release, once the new building is complete, the chamber will also sell the Pioneer Title building to generate additional funds.

For more information on the Chamber's building projects, contact Olivas at 541-567-6151.



Ben Lonergan/East Oregonian

Easter egg hunters stop to pick up eggs in the fields at Butte Park in Hermiston for the annual Flashlight Easter Egg Hunt on Friday, April 2, 2021.

Flashlight Easter Egg Hunt shines on

Children descend on Hermiston's Butte Park for annual event

By **BEN LONERGAN**
East Oregonian

HERMISTON — The Cotterell sisters, armed with masks, a cellphone flashlight and Hadley's self-proclaimed "night vision," clutched their bags as the countdown commenced.

In the moments before 8 p.m. on Friday, April 2, the sisters, Lucy, 11, and Hadley, 8, were planning their strategy for collecting the most eggs as they buzzed up and down the sideline of the fields at Butte Park ahead of the annual Flashlight Easter Egg Hunt.

"Over there they have more eggs spread out," said Lucy, of one of the two fields of eggs. "Except they're going to be picked up quicker because they're not spread out as much as these are."

More than 7,000 eggs dotted the soccer fields at

Hermiston's Butte Park distributed across a pair of roped-off sections as the Easter Bunny made its way around to take photos with families.

Emily Cotterell, the girls' mother, said it was nice to be out at an event again after roughly a year of limited in-person events. Emily Cotterell said they had attended the event when Lucy was 3 or so but found it a bit too chaotic. She said she hoped this year's event would prove a bit easier with the girls being older, and she hoped the pandemic would limit attendance further.

"We haven't really been out in public for the last year," Emily Cotterell said.

As the clock hit 8 p.m., the crowd of attendees descended on the field of eggs as the lights went dark. Across the fields, lights darted around in the darkness as children set about gathering the thousands of eggs spread across the park.

In a few short minutes, the hubbub had calmed and the fields lay barren of eggs as a few hopeful hunters scoured the ground in search

of one or two that had been overlooked.

"It doesn't take hardly any time at all," said Diana Picard, a recreation coordinator with the city of Hermiston.

Picard said she has been helping out at the event for more than a decade and this year's event came with a few added challenges as a result of the pandemic.

Picard said in years past the fields were divided up by age group to allow children to compete against kids their own age. In an effort to minimize unnecessary contacts, Picard said this year they encouraged families to stick together with each other as much as possible.

"We just figured that was the safest way of going about it," she said.

Picard said the event was put on by the Hermiston Parks and Recreation Department, and staff from the city's pool were able to help supervise and place eggs for the event. In addition to the staff at the pool, Picard extended her thanks to Rogers Toyota of Hermiston for sponsoring the event.

CTUIR plans new vaccine clinics

By **BRYCE DOLE**
East Oregonian

MISSION — Health officials with the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation are planning to vaccinate over 1,700 people in a series of clinics at Wildhorse Resort & Casino with new groups eligible, according to a press release from the CTUIR.

In addition to those who have previously been eligible to receive a vaccine from the Tribes, students over the age of 16 and educators from Blue Mountain Community College and all other Umatilla County high schools are eligible for the shot, the press release said.

"This is a huge step to get us back into classrooms at BMCC," said Megan Van Pelt, president of the BMCC Associated Student Government and enrolled CTUIR member. "I hope all of my fellow students will sign up today."

Also eligible for the

vaccine are employees of Pendleton-area restaurants, food trucks and grocery stores, the press release said.

People who were previously eligible include enrolled tribal members, people who are eligible to receive care from Yellowhawk Tribal Health Center, employees of CTUIR entities and their families, and all people over the age of 16 who live on the reservation.

The Tribes recently received enough doses of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine from the Indian Health Service to vaccinate 1,755 people at the upcoming clinics, the press release said. The clinics will once again be assisted by local members of the Oregon National Guard, the press release said.

"When IHS offered to provide us with additional doses, we jumped at the chance," said Kat Brigham, chair of the CTUIR Board of Trustees. "We asked the National Guard if they

would once again step up and they didn't hesitate to say yes. The fastest way to rebuild our economy and stop the fourth wave is to vaccinate more people. We are all in this together."

The first clinic will be held at Wildhorse on Monday, April 12, and Tuesday, April 13, from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Second doses will then be scheduled for May 3 and 4, the press release said.

CTUIR officials ask that students bring proof of enrollment to their scheduled appointment. They ask that Blue Mountain Community College students bring a copy of their term schedule from the CNS portal, and high school students should bring their school ID, the press release said.

People interested in getting the shot can schedule an appointment by calling 541-240-8733 or registering online at <https://airtable.com/shrb74wCvIR-6fnNJR>.

LOCAL BRIEFING

Hermiston sets kindergarten registration date

HERMISTON — Hermiston School District will open online registration for next year's kindergarten class on Monday, April 12.

Students eligible for kindergarten during the next school year are those who were born on or before Sept. 1, 2016.

Parents should start by filling out a registration form online at hermiston.k12.or.us/apps/pages/registration. Afterward, they will need to bring a birth record, proof of residence (such as a utility bill in the parent's name) and immunization records to the school where their child will attend.

The district will offer in-person registration assistance on Tuesday, April 20,

and Thursday, April 22, from 4 p.m. to 8 p.m. Parents can also call the district office at 541-667-6000 on weekdays if they have questions or issues.

M-F vaccination clinics gear up for coming week

MILTON-FREEWATER — State leaders continued to open doors for more people to receive vaccines this week as local clinics prepared to pump out more immunizations in the coming days.

In Umatilla County, Phase 1b Group 7 became eligible for vaccines as of Wednesday, March 31. You can find Oregon's phase information at covidvaccine.oregon.gov.

Milton-Freewater residents can find out about drive-thru vaccination clinics at ubne.ws/mfvaccines or

by calling 541-278-6311.

The next Milton-Freewater clinic is Thursday, April 8, at the Milton Seventh-day Adventist Church, 1244 N. Elizabeth St., Milton-Freewater.

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