

# Metalsmith hopes to carry on legacy of Hard Rock Machine Works owner

By CHLOE LEVALLEY  
Walla Walla Union-Bulletin

MILTON-FREEWATER — Mike Pierce went into former machine shop Hard Rock Machine Works in Walla Walla, Washington, to get a lug nut removed from his 1964 Baja Bug Volkswagen just before closing time.

The shop owner, David Young, told him not to worry about the price, and Pierce asked if he was hiring. Though the answer was no, Pierce persistently came into the shop and even started sweeping the floors for free.

After an employee didn't get some parts right, Pierce made them the right way, and he was hired.

This sparked a long-time career in machining and welding and opening his machine job shop in Milton-Freewater, Pierce Precision Machines, LLC, which provides custom machining, fabricating and welding services.

The shop opened in March and is located at 321 Peabody St.

He hopes the job shop will carry on the legacy of his friend, mentor and owner of Hard Rock Machine Works, David Young, who died two years ago and the shop closed, Pierce said.

"He taught me everything," Pierce said. "I had never touched a welder before I went into Hard Rock."

Pierce worked at the shop for about six years. Together they invented some parts for a wind turbine.

"Now there in use all over the world, every single Vestas wind turbine comes from the factory with one of the little jobs that we invented, which was kind of cool," he said.

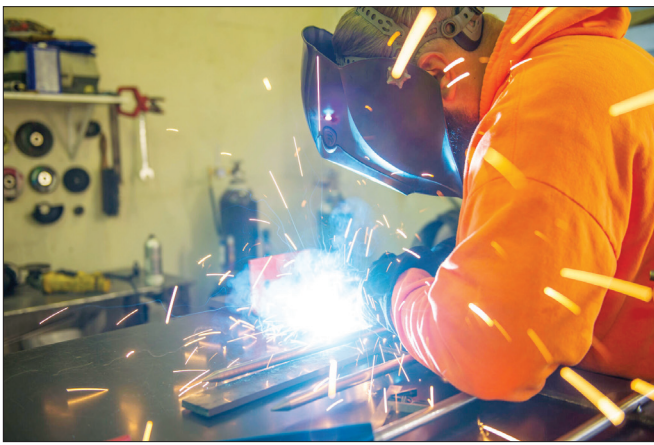
Pierce said his stepdad had done machining his whole life and taught an industrial manufacturing and precision machining course at Blue Mountain Community College and had a shop in his garage, so it runs in the family.

Pierce was also a marine engineer for the U.S. Merchant Marines, and he worked at various shops in town until he decided to strike out on his own. Now they refer each other for work depending on specialties.

His specialty is his knowledge about metallurgy, the



Greg Lehman/Walla Walla Union-Bulletin/Walla Walla Union-Bulletin  
Mike Pierce with some of his metal-working equipment at his Pierce Precision Machines shop in Milton-Freewater on Friday, April 23, 2021.



Greg Lehman/Walla Walla Union-Bulletin  
Mike Pierce welds on a recent project at his Pierce Precision Machines shop in Milton-Freewater on Friday, April 23, 2021.

compositions of metal and how they react to temperature changes.

"It helps play into this kind of stuff a lot because whenever you're welding and stuff, there's a lot of heat input, and so you've got warpage, and then you've got all sorts of different alloys of steel that you need to match with the correct filler rod," he said.

"There's different processes ... like we do a lot of cast iron welding and it takes a special nickel rod, and then we've got to put it down in ash and vermiculite to let it cool down at like a really stable rate."

He learned how to produce a lot of finely finished work by working as a bladesmith and even landed a spot competing in the History Channel series "Forged in Fire."

The job shop offers knife

sharpening and assists area restaurants like Public House 124.

The shop also sells steel and can cut the customer any amount needed.

"We'll take in all the jobs that nobody wants to do," he said.

Only they don't do engine machine work.

"We do fine precision machining, all the way up to greasy dirty (work)," Pierce said.

One day he is working on a walker or fixing someone's metal art for their yard, and then the next he's working on making parts for an airplane engine valve system — no project is too small.

Right now, he is building a custom hay baler. Typically, companies make ones that hold four or 10 bales, but his customer's tractor is too small, and they still don't want to buck the bales by

hand, so he is custom-making one to fit the tractor that will hold eight bales.

"We make things out of metal," he said. "We weld all metals, steel, stainless, aluminum, titanium, cast iron, brass."

Mainly, he aims to fill the need that came when Hard Rock Machine Works closed, and there was a great need in the valley for someone to do machine work and a lot of agricultural and construction repair work.

"If you have an old plow (that needs repair), the company probably went out of business like 60 to 80 years ago because your grandpa probably bought that plow," Pierce said. "And it's a plow, so it's not like you need to get a new plow every year."

His shop will repair it.

"It's really like a dying breed of people. Everybody in the U.S. kind of has like throw-away mentality," he said. "That's not feasible for the majority of situations. That's where we come in."

## HERMISTON

# Bark Park holds 'grand unleashing'

By JADE MCDOWELL  
East Oregonian

HERMISTON — June Rosenberg has made a lot of friends the past few weeks at the Hermiston Bark Park. Some of them have two legs, but most of them have four.

"Amanda and I have been meeting all of these dogs, and we know all these dogs' names but not the names of the people," she said.

Amanda Woodlee is one of the human friends Rosenberg has made since she began bringing Delilah Rose, her white Labrador, to the new dog park. While the park had its "grand unleashing" on Friday, April 30, some members of the public have been using it for a few weeks already after the fence went up.

Rosenberg said the large, fenced area at Butte Park, where dogs can run off leash, is a great way to socialize dogs and their owners. She said Delilah Rose loves it when other dogs are available to run around with.

"We come just about every day," she said. "It's so handy."

Woodlee brought Bowser, her family's stocky brown and white rescue dog, to the grand opening, and watched him play with the other dogs as they frolicked through the grass, running and rolling around and sniffing each other.

"It gets the energy out," she said.

The Hermiston Bark Park spans about 37,000 square feet at Butte Park, next to the splash park area. A large, fenced-off area is designated for large dogs, while a smaller area is for small dogs.



Ben Lonergan/East Oregonian  
Bowie explores the new Hermiston Bark Park during its "grand unleashing" on Friday, April 30, 2021.

Hermiston Parks and Recreation staff have made some improvements to the park other than the fence, including a concrete entry area and a stand that holds clean-up bags for waste. But Director Larry Fetter said some improvements are still on back order, including additional signs, benches and trash cans.

The department also plans to add a kiosk by the front gate, where people will be able to hang lost dog posters and other announcements.

"It's anything related — dog training, dog sitting. I don't know if we have dog walkers in town," Fetter said.

Shortly before the ribbon was cut at the park, Fetter said a dog park was something he had been hoping to bring to Hermiston for years.

"This project has been in the works for about 10 years," he said. "We looked at a lot of locations and I think we got a winner here."

The event included a demonstration by Paws Off Obedience, which handles the dog obedience trainings sponsored by the parks department each year, and bags of treats for dogs and humans alike.

## I Love My City



Jade McDowell/East Oregonian  
Volunteers with the I Love My City event help clear brush from a lot on Southwest Ninth Street in Hermiston on Saturday, May 1, 2021. The event brought together hundreds of volunteers from area churches, who pulled weeds, trimmed bushes, spread bark, picked up trash, washed cars and provided other cleanup efforts around the city.

## LOCAL BRIEFING

### Restaurant Revitalization Fund taking applications

WASHINGTON, D.C. — The federal Restaurant Revitalization Fund is now taking applications.

The fund, established by the American Rescue Plan stimulus package, provides forgivable, interest-free loans to bars, restaurants and other eating and drinking establishments affected by COVID-19 shutdowns.

Businesses can apply for an amount equal to their 2019 gross receipts minus their 2020 gross receipts, minus any Paycheck Protec-

tion Program funds already received. The minimum amount is \$1,000 per business, and the maximum is \$10 million. Eligible uses for the money includes a variety of business expenses, from payroll to rent, and recipients are not required to pay back any of the money as long as it is used for eligible expenses no later than March 2023.

Applications opened at noon on Monday, May 3. For more information, or to apply, visit the Small Business Administration website at [sba.gov/funding-programs/loans/covid-19-relief-options/restaurant-revitalization-fund](https://sba.gov/funding-programs/loans/covid-19-relief-options/restaurant-revitalization-fund).

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