

# EAST OREGONIAN

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## HEAT DOME



Ben Lonergan/East Oregonian

Aiden Rodriguez, left, plays defense as Faber Ortiz puts up a shot during a game of aquatic basketball Tuesday, June 29, 2021, at the Pendleton Family Aquatic Center. The National Weather Service reported the temperature in Pendleton reached 117 degrees, a new record high for the date.

## HERMISTON

### Students complete seventh home

By BEN LONERGAN  
East Oregonian

HERMISTON — While most students were learning remotely this school year, a half dozen Hermiston High School students rolled up their sleeves and traded textbooks for tools to build a house.

“Where others did not have school, I had class everyday,” said Curt Berger, the program coordinator with Columbia Basin Student Homes. “That’s why this house is done.”

On Tuesday, June 29, Berger handed over the keys to the latest home in the Hermiston School District’s Fieldstone subdivision on Southwest Angus Court to Loy and Mike Stratton, marking the end of the year-long student-built construction project.

The Strattons, who are moving to Hermiston from Pendleton to be closer to family, said they loved working with the students and developing some of the final touches.

“I was very excited,” said Loy Stratton. “I love the great room — I love to cook so everyone will be with me there.”

Loy Stratton said she worked closely with former student builder Rylee Albert to nail down final details, such as light fixtures.

“They had most of it picked out already,” she said. Albert took part in constructing one of the earlier Columbia Basin Student Homes and came back this year to help with design decisions and to mentor students.

“It’s been really neat being able to help people learn it because it’s such a useful skill,” she said.

Berger said he loves to get as much help from outside contractors and other mentors for students as possible to help them learn through the process.

“It’s lots of fun for us because we’re not just turning in a paper or doing an assignment — we’re building a for-real product that we’re going to sell,” said Berger.

Students worked throughout the year to see the 2,232-square-foot,

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# HEAT WAVE BREAKS RECORDS

## State Medical Examiner reports high heat claimed one life in Umatilla County

By ANTONIO SIERRA  
East Oregonian

PENDLETON — The word “unprecedented” isn’t thrown around lightly in meteorology, but the heat wave enveloping Eastern Oregon and the rest of the Northwest has no recorded historical precedent.

An extended surge in high temperatures has shattered records across the region, sometimes by as much as 5 degrees. According to the National Weather Service, the Tuesday, June 29, temperatures in Pendleton — 117 degrees — and Hermiston — 118 degrees — are all-time modern highs for the two cities. The normal temperatures for this time of year is in the mid-80s.

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## FIREWORKS BAN

### ‘The fear is real’

Umatilla County, Pendleton ban fireworks for Fourth due to fire danger

By BRYCE DOLE  
East Oregonian

PENDLETON — As a record-breaking drought and heat wave scorches Eastern Oregon, Umatilla County and the city of Pendleton banned fireworks as residents prepare to celebrate the Fourth of July.

The county board of commissioners made its call during an administrative meeting Wednesday morning, June 30, and the Pendleton City Council voted for its ban in a special meeting in the afternoon. Both bans come with the threat of



Ben Lonergan/East Oregonian, File

Fireworks explode over Butte Park in Hermiston July 4, 2020. The Umatilla County Board of Commissioners on Wednesday, June 30, 2021, banned the use of fireworks due to fire danger. The ban applies to all unincorporated parts of the county with violators subject to a \$500 fine.

\$500 fines for violations.

The city’s resolution aligns with an executive order from the governor declaring a drought emergency in Umatilla County, meaning fireworks will be banned through Dec. 31 unless lifted earlier.

The county’s ban will last through Sept. 30, “or sooner if conditions change,” and applies to all unincorporated areas in the

county and is effective immediately, Commissioner George Murdock said. The ban is to prevent wildfires in vulnerable areas where “the tiniest spark could result in a conflagration,” he added.

“We’re deeply concerned about the fire danger,” Murdock said. “It’s our job to measure

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## PENDLETON

### Facilities manager retires after nearly five decades

By ANTONIO SIERRA  
East Oregonian

PENDLETON — Glenn Graham woke up on New Year’s Day feeling unwell, but if he was being honest, he hadn’t been feeling well for a few weeks.

That feeling of unwellness eventually resulted in an emergency trip to Kadlec Regional Medical Center in Richland, Washington, where he learned that an irregular heart rhythm had driven his heart beat down to 28 beats per minute, well below the 60-100 beats per minute doctors consider normal.

After successfully installing a pacemaker, Graham’s doctor said many patients never make it to the

operating table and if he wanted to avoid further heart problems, he would need to take steps to destress his life.

With that “life changing event” in mind, Graham, 65, decided to retire from his position as the facilities manager for the city of Pendleton, ending a more than 45-year career in city government.

“It was just time,” he said.

Graham had just been laid off at the lumber mill in Pilot Rock in the 1970s when he discovered an opportunity with the city of Pendleton. A state grant funded a position to install sprinkler systems throughout the city’s park system, but Graham

would need to go to Portland to get some training.

“I knew it got the grass wet,” Graham said about how much he knew about sprinklers before being hired.



Graham

He ended up catching on with the Pendleton Parks and Recreation Department, and when the city looked to start its first facilities department, they tapped Graham to be its first manager. At the time, Graham said his main responsibilities were the city’s various heating, ventilation and air conditioning systems and the public pool, which required he get more training.

“Again, I knew it got you wet,” Graham said about his knowledge

about pool maintenance.

Graham’s responsibilities have expanded as Pendleton has built new facilities, but he said the most significant change is the rise of technology. Graham was around when the city installed its first computer system, but he said the city’s tech needs really took off once city hall relocated in the 1990s.

Graham said he was especially proud to work with Wtechlink to install fiber lines at every city building, ensuring every facility had high-speed internet to quickly transfer data and information.

His time with the city is ending on a high note. Although COVID-19

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