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Faithful fill Hermiston for CityFest

Thousands gather and eschew masks, social distancing

By ERICK PETERSON
East Oregonian

HERMISTON — Thousands of people crowded the Hermiston Butte Park Friday and Saturday, Aug. 27 and 28, to experience Greater Hermiston CityFest with Andrew Palau, a celebration of Christ and fun.

Attendees included the Hardcastle family of Pendleton. Scott and Terri Hardcastle brought their daughter and her four children to enjoy music, bicycle stunts and praise. Scott said he was looking forward to meeting Christian artist Danny Gokey at CityFest, while his wife, Terri, said she already had enjoyed her favorite part of the event — seeing her granddaughter Lily get up on stage and play a game.

This was a special event for them, Terri said, because they have rarely been able to get out of their home for fun. They have been able to do little more than go shopping, she said.

Chris Hankel, New Hope Community Church's lead pastor, said creating this fun for the Hardcastles and others had been in the works



Ben Lonergan/East Oregonian
Evangelist Andrew Palau welcomes the crowd to the Greater Hermiston CityFest with Andrew Palau on Saturday, Aug. 28, 2021, at Butte Park in Hermiston.

for a long time. The Hermiston pastor had helped organize CityFest, and he said that people had been talking about it for at least three years.

"We wanted to do this a year ago and put this on hold," Hankel said.

Organizers delayed the event because of COVID-19. The disease continues to hit Umatilla County, which has reported at least 17 COVID-19-related deaths this month. Still, they kept thoughts of the festival in mind, and they were seeing, more and more, the need for a message of hope.

"I've dealt with more suicides than I have ever dealt with in my over 30 years of

ministry, this year," Hankel said. He also said he has seen an abundance of marital problems and other signs that people have been struggling.

The message of hope comes at a good time, he said, adding God loves us and walks with us through difficult things. People love us, too, he said, which should make us less isolated.

The message was not just for Christian believers. Hankel said he believes the church has not always shared the message of God's love well, but believers "want to do this better."

They want to show everyone they are willing to love individuals regardless of their

baggage or other troubles.

They also want to show they are present.

Believers were present the night of Aug. 27, for a "Fiesta Latina" preview of the event Aug. 28. This scaled-down presentation was in Spanish, with Spanish-language singers and Spanish translation of English speeches.

Dan Clark, church relations director for CityFest, said the first day was important as outreach to the Hispanic community.

"The good news should reach everybody," he said. "It shouldn't just be a certain denomination of people or ethnicity of people. It should be widespread."

Clark added CityFest even tried to present at local prisons with bicycle stunts and music. Andrew Palau, the headliner for this event, even was planning to speak. The plan was canceled, though.

"This is awesome," said Daniel Longhin, pastor of Hispanic ministries at New Hope, of the Aug. 27 festival. He said he loves music. Also, CityFest has an "interesting approach," sharing a message of hope, which was also expressed in the Gospel.

He said, "we live in crazy

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Ben Lonergan/East Oregonian
Kate Thomason leads team building activities Friday, Aug. 27, 2021, during an orientation session at Hermiston High School. Thomason is an employee of the Boomerang Project, which runs the school orientation program Link Crew.

Bulldogs out of the doghouse for first day at school

By ERICK PETERSON
East Oregonian

HERMISTON — Hermiston High School was buzzing with excitement Friday, Aug. 27, as new students entered for orientation.

Seniors, such as Yudith Chavez-Flores, welcomed incoming freshmen, who have not had a full year of school since they completed the sixth grade. Perhaps surprisingly, she said the pandemic lockdown was not all bad.

"I don't think I really ever left my house," she said.

During the lockdown, she got to spend more time with family and focus on schoolwork, she said. Still, the return to school is a joy. This year, she enrolled in some advanced placement classes and signed up to be a bilingual tutor.

Unbothered by rules that require students to wear masks, she said she is hopeful for a positive year and wants to be a leader in her school.

"I'm really, really happy to be back in school, and not just online," she said.

Itzel Alatorre, a senior, also expressed enthusiasm for the start of school.

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Ben Lonergan/East Oregonian
Fans gather for musical acts Saturday, Aug. 28, 2021, at the Greater Hermiston CityFest with Andrew Palau in Butte Park.



Schools welcome new principals

By ANTONIO SIERRA
East Oregonian

PENDLETON — On Tuesday, Aug. 31, nearly half of the Pendleton School District's student body will be overseen by a new principal when they return to school.

Over the summer, the district needed to replace three veteran administrators who left for other jobs. The new principals — Pat Dutcher at Pendleton High School, Sherri Kilgore at McKay Creek Elementary School and J.P. Richards at Washington Elementary School — were all outside hires. But each had personal connections to Pendleton that drew them to the district. Both Dutcher and Richards left jobs at much larger districts to move to Eastern Oregon.

Washington and Sherwood Heights elementary schools also are getting assistant principals, the first time those schools have filled those positions since a shared position was eliminated in 2017.

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Young Eagles take flight

Kids and teens take to the skies over Umatilla County

By NICK ROSENBERGER
East Oregonian

PENDLETON — Piercing a hole through the blue sky over Pendleton on Saturday, Aug. 28, a Cessna 172G with a red stripe down its side tore along with a low humming buzz — its shape just able to be made out, a blurry metal glint in the sky. Inside the cockpit, a pilot gave children and teens their first opportunities to

take to the skies, cruising over the rolling hills, ranches and towns that dot Umatilla County.

The trip, a 15- to 20-minute ride that landed back at Eastern Oregon Regional Airport with a whoosh of rubber and shuddering metal, was part of Young Eagles Day. The local chapter of the Experimental Aircraft Association put on the event to encourage children and young adults to find a passion for aviation. With 62 youths who signed up for the free event, kids bubbled with excitement and nerves throughout the staging area.

"It was probably one of the

best experiences of my life," said Mary Hale, a 17-year-old from the Tri-Cities. Hale, who is going into her senior year of high school, was looking into different career paths but might have settled on one after liftoff.

"I think I want to go into this as my job," Hale said. "I want to be a pilot."

She said aviation seemed like such an exciting career that would always send her to new places. She added she especially loved how the pilots and flight attendants are all part of a big team that works together.

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Ben Lonergan/East Oregonian
Pilot Don Gibbard walks a group of children through the mechanics of how an airplane works during a Young Eagles flight day Saturday, Aug. 28, 2021, at the Eastern Oregon Regional Airport in Pendleton. The day offered children the opportunity to ride in an airplane and learn how airplanes work.



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