

CORK & BARREL



Ben Lonergan/East Oregonian

People gather Saturday, Oct. 9, 2021, on Festival Street in Hermiston for the Hermiston Downtown District's Cork & Barrel wine tasting event.

Hermiston woman, loved ones mark 100 years of life

"I love this town," centenarian says.

By ERICK PETERSON
East Oregonian

HERMISTON — Hermiston resident Irene Miller and many of her loved ones celebrated, Saturday, Oct. 9, as Miller neared her 100th birthday. She who would turn 100 two days later, enjoyed a party Saturday at the Harkenrider Senior Activity Center, Hermiston.

In addition to partying with her family, who travelled from locations as far as Colorado, she friendly passersby also wished her well. Miller greeted friends for a "drive-by celebration," in which people drove past the senior center, stop briefly and then shouted out a greeting to the new centenarian. This was done to limit potential COVID-19 exposure.

At the party, Miller's loved ones boasted of her health and strong mental capacities.

"I keep telling people I'm an S.O.S. — slower, older and smarter," Miller said.

She said she has two secrets to good living: a sense of humor and a positive attitude.

Miller said she had been looking forward to her 100th birthday for about 10 years. It meant a great deal to her, she said, to be in the company of her three daughters, their husbands, their children and grandchildren. Short a couple of close family members, who were not able to be at the party because of a COVID-19 scare, there were more than 20 attendees.

"I love this town," she said, because Hermiston is a good place to raise children. It also has given her many opportunities to be active. At the party, she spoke of her involvement in the hospital auxiliary, the parent-teacher association and the First Methodist Church. She also was a leader in her daughter's groups — Camp Fire Girls, Bluebirds and 4-H — when they were children.

While Miller listed a few of her accomplishments and community work, other partygoers mentioned her other activities. She, along



Irene Miller and family members pose for a photo at her birthday party, Saturday, Oct. 9, 2021, at the Harkenrider Senior Activity Center, Hermiston.



Erick Peterson/East Oregonian

Irene Miller, of Hermiston, waves at a passerby to her 100th birthday party Saturday, Oct. 9, 2021.

with her family, sponsored two foreign students. Also, she donated 23 gallons of blood, worked for Habitat for Humanity and was president of the senior center board. She even helped to create the Harkenrider Senior Activity Center, people said.

She remains active, as she enjoys playing cards and bingo with friends, children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren. She also embroiders, crochets and knits, creating hundreds of items that remain treasured objects.

"She is so full of love, and joyfulness and laughter," said

Judy Lovins, one of Miller's three daughters. "We love her so much."

"I love her deeply," said Edna Jean "Tara" Miller, another of Miller's daughters. "She's such an inspiration, just in terms of her sharp mind, her soul, her kindness, her sense of humor and her service."

The "baby" of the three daughters, Kathy Crowley, complimented her mother for being "always there" for her and all of her family and friends.

"I enjoy her humor, her love and her beauty," Crowley said. Her mother has

taught her how to be positive, driven and sportsmanlike.

They are not alone in loving Miller, according to the trio of daughters. They said this celebration would have included 150 more people if not for COVID-19. At Miller's last big birthday smash, two years ago, visitors packed the senior center.

As a social person, Miller has loved these large gatherings. She also loves going to Seattle Mariner games and traveling, things she has not been able to do lately. But she has, been able to keep active with some of her favorite things, as she still meets friends for cards.

Ruth Ford, who often plays cards with Miller, was one of the people who drove past the senior center to offer birthday greetings. They have known each other 40 years.

"She's not like a 100-year-old," Ford said, as Miller keeps score and shuffles when they play pinochle and canasta. The centenarian even frequently wins these games.

Miller's loved ones said they are looking forward to her next birthday party.

Hermiston chamber unveils its new digs



Tammy Malgesini/East Oregonian

Val Hoxie, Hermiston Chamber of Commerce executive assistant, poses Monday, Oct., 11, 2021, in front of a large canvas mural that features many aspects of the Hermiston area. The chamber invites the public to an open house Oct. 15, 2021, at the new chamber office, 630 S. Highway 395, Hermiston.

By TAMMY MALGESINI
East Oregonian

HERMISTON — Even while wearing masks Monday morning, Oct. 11, you could see the excitement on the faces of Val Hoxie, the Hermiston Chamber of Commerce executive assistant, and Kris Bennett, board of directors chair. Anticipating an upcoming open house, the two women were putting finishing touches on the chamber's new office space. Everyone is invited to drop in Friday, Oct. 15, between 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., 630 S. Highway 395, Hermiston.

Hoxie, who has been with the chamber since July 30, moved to Hermiston in October 2020. After Kristina Olivas, the chamber's chief executive officer since March, recently returned to her previous employer, Hoxie has been busy moving forward with chamber programs and planning for the transition to the newly remodeled space at the former Pioneer Title building. And she couldn't be more excited.

"This community is so welcoming," Hoxie said. "I've truly fallen in love with it."

Following Olivas' departure, the chamber board immediately launched a search for her replacement. Bennett said the board will make an announcement and introduce its new executive at 4:30 p.m. during the open house.

For nearly two decades, the chamber had been housed in the Hermiston Community Center. However, in January 2018, the city of Hermiston ended its contract with the chamber and moved its parks and recreation

program into the center.

Several months after moving its office to the Cornerstone Plaza, the chamber received a \$1 million allocation from the state to build a new workforce development center. After purchasing property on South Highway 395 across from New Hope Community Church and drafting plans for the project, a fundraising drive has been delayed because of the global pandemic.

Although those plans are on hold, the chamber still wanted to move forward with providing workforce development and have meeting space available for its membership. The former Pioneer Title building offers that — plus, Hoxie and Bennett said the location's visibility is very appealing.

"In just the few weeks that we've been here, we have a lot more walk-in traffic," Hoxie said. "And the phone is ringing off the hook."

Entering the building, people are immediately greeted with a large mural-type canvas created by Lisa Peppard of Artful Virgo. The colorful piece features various logos and designs that depict all things Hermiston and beyond.

Bennett, who owns KRISanthemums, is especially excited about the opportunity to help other local businesses thrive — whether it's through offering resources and training or space and networking.

"It's for the community, that's why we're here," she said "We want to make things easier for businesses."

Contact community writer Tammy Malgesini at tmalgesini@eastoregonian.com or 541-564-4532.

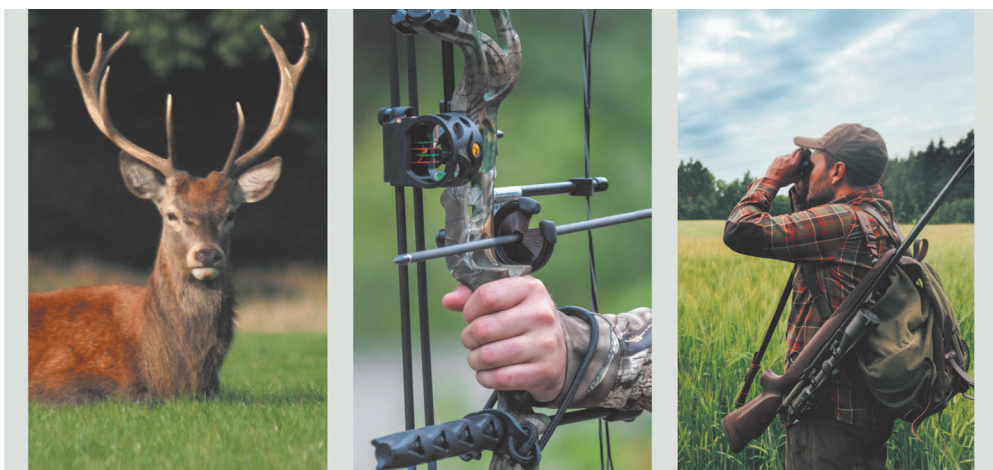
COMMUNITY BRIEF

Heppner chamber hosts luncheon

HEPPNER — Larry Lutcher with the Oregon State University Extension Office will serve as the guest speaker during the quarterly luncheon of the Heppner Chamber of Commerce.

The no-host event is Thursday, Oct. 21, noon at the Morrow County Museum, 444 N. Main St., Heppner. Catered by Gateway Cafe, the teriyaki chicken bowl meal costs \$10 per person. Those planning to attend need to RSVP by Monday, Oct. 18, via 541-676-5536 or heppner-chamber@gmail.com.

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