

Dozens gather for pre-Thanksgiving feast in Echo church

By BRYCE DOLE
East Oregonian

ECHO — Since the February 2020 flooding of the Umatilla River, Pastor John Marcum of the Echo Community Church has lived in a fifth wheel trailer in a Hermiston recreational vehicle park.

The floodwaters destroyed his home. But, as he put it, “You just had to keep on living.”

In just two or three weeks, he’ll be back in Echo, living in his new home, he said. But that isn’t all Marcum is grateful for this Thanksgiving. He expressed his gratitude for the 40-plus people who gathered in the basement of the 150-year-old church, sharing a pre-Thanksgiving feast on a clear and sunny Saturday, Nov. 20.

“It’s a time to be thankful for all we go through,” he said. “Because it makes



Ben Lonergan/East Oregonian

Pastor John Marcum, right, of the Echo Community Church, passes through the buffet line, Saturday, Nov. 20, 2021, during a Thanksgiving meal put on by the church in Echo.

us better.”
The smells of the massive feast — complete with 30

pies, four turkeys, one ham, salad, fruit, stuffing, mashed potatoes, macaroni and

cheese, rolls and more — wafted through the door and outside to the street. There,

flowers, signs for pumpkins and scarecrows decorated the front of the church, signaling exactly what time of year this is.

Inside, people sat at tables, chatting about what’s new around town and what Thanksgiving means to them. Women cooked and carried trays of food and meandered around the room filled with people who have frequented the church for years.

Marcum said there were about twice as many people at the meal as last year, when the pandemic still had much of America on lockdown. Though attendance still has not reached previous years, where as many as 100 people would come for the meal, Marcum said it seemed people were ready to be out socializing.

Among them was Ken Linda Nelson, who joined the church in 1989. She lives

in Hermiston and makes the commute to Echo for the fellowship she experiences there. And in just more than a month, she’ll come to the church and play “Let There be Peace on Earth” on a flute on Christmas Eve.

“This is a month for being thankful,” she said. “I enjoy the fellowship here, and this is a good way to do it.”

Janice Diggins also has been with the church for more than 20 years. She moved back to Echo to take care of her mother before she died at the age of 93 late last December.

A board member with the church, Diggins has been involved with the choir until about a month ago. Now, at the age of 84, she said she enjoys Thanksgiving for how it brings her family together, many of whom live in Echo.

“It’s a time of fellowship,” she said. “And a time of family.”

LOCAL BRIEFS

No print paper on Thanksgiving holiday

PENDLETON — In observance of the Thanksgiving holiday, the East Oregonian will not publish a print edition on Thursday, Nov. 25.

“It’s a chance to give our employees an opportunity to spend an uninterrupted holiday with their families,” said EO editor and publisher Andrew Cutler.

The EO will publish an expanded edition, including additional comics and puzzle features as well as the weekly GO! magazine, on Nov. 23.

An e-edition only paper will be published on Thanksgiving and will be available to paid subscribers through the East Oregonian website, www.eastoregonian.com. The Thanksgiving e-edition will include local stories, an opinion page and sports.

To make sure you are subscribed to the e-edition:

- Log on to www.eastoregonian.com/users/forgot, enter your email address and click “I’m not a robot” then “Reset Password.”
- An email will be sent to you with a link to click on, click on the link.
- A website will popup to enter your new password.
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County sets single-day record with six COVID-19 deaths

PENDLETON — Umatilla County set its single-day pandemic record for reported COVID-19 deaths with six reported Friday, Nov. 19.

That raised the county’s pandemic death toll to 176, according to the health department.

The disclosure comes as the county reports 22 COVID-19 cases, almost ensuring this week’s total will be the lowest since early July. The county has reported declining COVID-19 case counts for seven consecutive weeks, according to the Oregon Health Authority. Below is a breakdown of the six fatalities:

- The 171st victim is an 80-year-old woman who tested positive Sept. 3 and died Nov. 2 at Milton-Freewater Health and Rehabilitation Center, Milton-Freewater. She had unspecified underlying health conditions.
- The 172nd victim is a 91-year-old man who tested positive Oct. 18 and died Nov. 14 at Desire for Healing, Pendleton. He had unspecified underlying health conditions.
- The 173rd victim is a 67-year-old woman who tested positive Oct. 25 and died Nov. 16 at Good Shepherd Medical Center, Hermiston. She had unspecified underlying health conditions.
- The 174th victim is a 60-year-old man who tested positive Oct. 30 and died Nov. 15 at St. Luke’s Medical Center, Boise. He had unspecified underlying health conditions.
- The 175th victim is a 71-year-old woman who died April 29 at a private residence. The health department did not disclose when she tested positive, though her death certificate “listed COVID-19 as a contributing cause of death.” She had unspecified underlying health conditions.
- The 176th victim is a 65-year-old man who died Oct. 8 at a private residence. The health department did not disclose when he tested positive, though his death certificate “listed COVID-19 as a contributing cause of death.” He had unspecified underlying health conditions.

As of this week, the county has reported more than 15,000 confirmed and presumptive COVID-19 cases, according to the health department.

—EO Media Group

Sale at VFW closes the door on post

By ERICK PETERSON
East Oregonian

HERMISTON — After years of troubles with the Hermiston branch of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, the post is history.

Oregon VFW officials on Saturday and Sunday, Nov. 20 and 21, held a final sale of whatever was left in the old VFW Hall, 45 W. Cherry Ave., Hermiston.

On the first day of the sale, the officials surrounded themselves with many items left behind and unclaimed by former post members. Stackable chairs, United States flags and Bradford Exchange eagles were just some of the many objects. Even the building was for sale.

“It’s sad. I didn’t want this to happen. No one wanted this to happen,” said Dennis Pratt, state commander.

The Oregon VFW was in Hermiston “to help clean up this mess,” said Allen Anderson, state senior vice commander. Anderson worked alongside Pratt and others in the sale.

When speaking of cleaning up, he was not just referring to the physical items, but the Hermiston VFW. The local organization, he explained, was shut down by the national organization after years of troubles that brought investigations. The Department of Justice,

the IRS and local police all were looking into the Hermiston veteran group’s affairs, he said.

Anderson described several allegations, from breaking bylaws, such as not being present for the installment of new officers, to theft of \$75,000 from the Hermiston group’s account.

This is all disappointing, Anderson said, as he looked around at the folded flags and other items for sale. He added it was avoidable, as the Oregon VFW tried to help the Hermiston VFW stay open.

“It’s a tragedy, because you are losing a lot of history,” Pratt said.

He opened a book, “History of the Oregon Veterans of Foreign Wars: 100 Year Anniversary,” to show a page devoted to the Hermiston VFW, Post 4750.

The page describes activities, which the organization maintained starting at its beginning in 1945. Pratt and Susan Teruya, who were both at the sale, were credited on the cover of the book.

The book’s entry on the post ends with mention of its closure, May, 14, 2021.

The post was a “loose cannon,” Anderson said, which is why it needed closing. He said the state VFW filed the post’s back taxes and cleared up other problems. The bickering, the “out-and-

out feud” resembled a “war zone,” the vice commander added, and it could not be rectified, despite efforts.

During the post’s suspension, Dale Pack worked closely with the post. As the state judge advocate, he was tasked to “keep people on the right track,” he said. He said he ran the post during the past summer and he did not see a way for the local post to continue.

Anderson added the post was divided and members were not committed to acting within the bylaws. He said members had “been kicked out of the VFW entirely” over actions at the post.

“What do you do?” he asked. “Do you let it turn until somebody is killed?”

He said he was not speaking metaphorically. He said he thought real bloodshed was possible.

“It was a volatile situation,” he said, with one member making threats against another. The sale was, then, a hopeful end to the group’s problems.

Pratt said the state organization is healthy overall, though there are some problem posts. He expressed a belief that the VFW was getting younger and is on the verge of renewal. He said he has hope for a new post formed in Hermiston, as someone already has approached him on the topic.

City of Umatilla

WINTER Festival

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CRAFT VENDORS

Schedule of Events
Dec 3, 4-7pm and Dec 4, 12-7 pm

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HOT FOOD

03 DEC	<p>FESTIVAL STARTS, ICE SKATING OPENS H STREET AND VILLAGE SQUARE PARK 4:00 PM</p>	
03 DEC	<p>VISIT WITH SANTA FROM 5 PM TO 6 PM UMATILLA LIBRARY 5:00 PM</p>	
03 DEC	<p>UMATILLA SCHOOL CHOIR COMMUNITY CAROLING! VILLAGE SQUARE PARK 6:00 PM</p>	
03 DEC	<p>LIGHTING OF THE HOLIDAY TREE! VILLAGE SQUARE PARK 6:15 PM</p>	
03 DEC	<p>FESTIVAL CLOSES, ICE SKATING CLOSES H STREET AND VILLAGE SQUARE PARK 7:00 PM</p>	
04 DEC	<p>FESTIVAL OPENS, ICE SKATING OPENS VILLAGE SQUARE PARK, H STREET 12:00 PM</p>	
04 DEC	<p>VISIT WITH SANTA, 1 TO 2 PM AND 5 TO 6 PM UMATILLA LIBRARY 1:00 PM</p>	
04 DEC	<p>HORSE DRAWN CARRIAGE RIDES FROM 4 TO 7! 6TH STREET 4:00 PM</p>	
04 DEC	<p>LIVE MUSIC FROM ONE STREET OVER FROM 4 TO 7! VILLAGE SQUARE PARK 4:00 PM</p>	
04 DEC	<p>FESTIVAL ENDS, ICE SKATING CLOSES VILLAGE SQUARE PARK, H STREET 7:00 PM</p>	

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