

Upcoming Christian gathering seeks to empower women

By ERICK PETERSON
East Oregonian

HERMISTON — An annual event in Hermiston that has drawn female believers returns this year. IF:Gathering comes back for an in-person format March 4 and 5 at New Hope Community Church, 1350 S. Highway 395, Hermiston. On the first day, doors open at 5 p.m. for a 6 p.m. start. For the second day

of the event, doors open at 8:30 a.m. for a 9 a.m. start. IF:Hermiston is part of a larger national women's nondenominational event, IF:Gathering. Kimberly Rill, a volunteer for the event, explained the first IF:Gathering in 2014 had the theme, "If we follow God, then what can happen?" The following events kept this title, inviting attendees to imagine the possibilities of their devotion.

According to a recent press release, the main IF:Gathering is in Dallas, Texas. Hermiston and other communities are hosting their own events that will stream the Dallas event and watch its speakers. The IF:Hermiston event also will have local speakers. Rill said at the start, IF:Hermiston was a small gathering and has grown each year. Around 300 people have been show-

ing up in recent years, and they come from Hermiston, Boardman, Irrigon, Umatilla and other nearby cities. "We draw in a big crowd," she said. And all attendees are women. Rill, who also is a workforce training specialist with the Port of Morrow, said she started her involvement with this event as a participant. She later became a volunteer. "I felt like it was a really

strong group of women in Hermiston," she said. "They were doing a great mission. It's a great event and something I want to see continue." She said every year is different, but this year's overall message is that God can do good things. She added she hopes women can learn new ways of communication through their involvement in IF:Hermiston. Also, they should feel empowered, Rill said.

Topics will include "living with compassion and conviction," social media use, embracing emotions and family life, she said. The press release directs people to IF:Hermiston on Facebook for more information. In addition, women are asked to register at www.tinyurl.com/ifhermiston2022. After registering, further details will be provided. Email questions to if.hermiston@gmail.com.

Hermiston Rotary donates \$9K to help fund Christmas Express

By ERICK PETERSON
East Oregonian

HERMISTON — It already is beginning to look a lot like Christmas for at least one group of donors in Hermiston. The Hermiston Rotary Club recently donated \$9,000 to help support next December's Christmas Express. Founded by the Hermiston Police Department, this annual charity drive provides food and toys to individuals in need.

Volunteers include police officers, firefighters and city employees. Donors include local organizations, individuals and companies. According to Jason Edmiston, Hermiston police chief, Rotary "is and has been the largest monetary donor" for Christmas Express. "If it wasn't for Rotary and a couple of other 'large' donors, we would not be able to keep putting the program on," Edmiston said. "I firmly believe our program assists the Agape House not only in December but January and likely February as well." The chief also credited local students for donating an "incredible amount of canned food items."

Glenn Silaski, Rotary president, said his group's donation is in line with its mission and history. The club, he said, has long supported local charities. "It's one of the biggest traditions that I got to know when I joined Rotary, when I came to town seven years ago," he said. "It's just something there's a lot of enthusiasm for." He added that Rotarians look forward to Christmas Express and discuss it throughout the year. "It's a Christmas tradition for us to sit down and grab that checkbook," Silaski said, and members pitch in individually to "do the things that money can do." But money alone does not make Christmas Express happen every year. He said volunteers deserve credit for doing the "real work" of packaging items and distributing them to where they are needed. "Those are the guys who do the work," he said. "Rotary is happy to help pay some of the bills, but the real heroes are the people who join in. With all the things to do around the holiday, they put in the effort."

Jackalope Jamboree expands to three days

By TAMMY MALGESINI
East Oregonian

PENDLETON — In just its third year of existence, Jackalope Jamboree is gearing up for a three-day country and Americana music festival at the Happy Canyon Arena in Pendleton. The event features headliners each night. Reckless Kelly will kick things off Thursday, June 23, Turnpike Troubadours will travel to the stage Friday, June 24, and closing out the event on Saturday, June 25, is Mike & The Moonpies. Nearly 20 musical acts will take the stage during the festival.



Ben Lonergan/East Oregonian, File
Concertgoers dance as Jesse Daniel performs June 26, 2021, during Jackalope Jamboree at the Happy Canyon Arena, Pendleton. The country singer-songwriter returns for the 2022 musical festival, which is June 23-25.

According to Chad Colwell, one of the event's organizers, if early ticket sales are any indication, this could be the best year yet. Landing Turnpike Troubadours, he said, "is kind of a big draw for us." In less than a month, Colwell said they have more than doubled tickets sales as compared to all of last year. Running on adrenaline from a successful inaugural event in 2019, Colwell and fellow organizers Rian Beach and Daren Lequerica announced in early 2020 plans to expand to two days for the second year. And then the global pandemic pulled the plug, forcing the trio to wait until

2021 for their sophomore event. Even with some lingering restrictions and the sweltering heat, Colwell said more than 1,000 attended on the festival's first day and a tick below that showed up for Saturday's performances. Colwell said early out of the chute, the idea was to move beyond a one-day event. "We wanted to see this thing grow," he said. "It was a goal at some point to expand and get bigger." However, they didn't have to recreate the wheel in order to jump from one day to multiple days, Colwell said. A number of music festivals,

he said, have created a sort of template for that, including the Braun Brothers Reunion (Challis, Idaho) and Hwy 30 Music Fest (Filer, Idaho). Contributing factors to Jackalope Jamboree's quick success, Colwell said, have been a supportive community, solid sponsorship and Travel Pendleton's promotional efforts. Another big draw, he said, is mixing up the lineup. In addition to national touring and traveling acts, Colwell said it's important to include local musicians or those with ties to the region — that includes such talent as James Dean Kindle, Elwood and

Taylor & the Train Robbers. "Pendleton and Eastern Oregon has a tremendous music scene ... there's a lot of great music and we want to showcase them," he said. While two- and three-day packages have been on sale for nearly a month, single-day ticket options are available starting Monday, Feb. 21. For a link to ticket information, visit www.jackalopejamboree.com. Also, with RV/trailer camping already selling out, organizers are trying to secure another location. He encouraged people to keep an eye on the event website and social media pages for updates.



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