



Erick Peterson/East Oregonian

Christy Meyers, office assistant at West Park Elementary School, Hermiston, opens her school's new book vending machine on Friday, March 25, 2022.

West Park Elementary adds a book vending machine to its library

By ERICK PETERSON
East Oregonian

HERMISTON — A new vending machine in Hermiston contains something that will strike some people as a surprise.

Instead of candy or soda, West Park Elementary now has a book vending machine inside its library.

"I really like it," fourth grader Kaitlyn Solorio said. "It's really pretty, and I like how they decorated it."

The vending machine is decorated in school colors and logos, it contains 250 books and it stands near the checkout desk in the school's library. Kaitlyn said she has looked the machine over several times, and she already has picked out the books she would like to own from it.

According to school office assistant Christy Meyers, the machine is generating a buzz among students, even though the machine is not now working. The school is waiting on a repair; still, students are regularly asking about it.

"They're really so excited, so excited," she said.

The books, Meyers said, are not for checkout. Rather, they are intended as prizes for students, who earn tokens for achieving reading goals. Then, they drop the coins in the machine's slot, select their desired books and wait for books to drop into a drawer, where they can be retrieved.

Meyers said she first heard of the machines from a friend on Facebook. She then started talking about it to school administration and members of the Parent-Teacher Organization. The PTO, she said, loved the idea and offered to pay for it.

The PTO purchased the machine for around \$6,000, which includes service. There was no cost to the school or the Hermiston School District, according to Meyers.

"There was a lot of work for it," she said. "Carnivals, fundraisers, popcorn sales, all sorts of things have been done. Kid Bank was huge, and there were so many other things where people worked really hard."

She said the idea has been implemented by other schools, which have found success. In ordinary reading programs, such as the one at West Park, students meet their goals and are handed books. But, she said, there is more excitement with something new. By giving coins and allowing students to select their own book from a machine, they are enjoying something different.

Where this has been done, Meyers said, students have liked it, which encourages them to read more, earn more coins and obtain more books.

This machine is not, and could never, replace the school's librarian, as it does not check out books, Meyers said. Also, she added, it does not perform the many other tasks of the library staff.

This came as good news to Amy Cooper, West Park Elementary library assistant, who was looking over the vending machine with Meyers on March 25.

"I'm not threatened by it



Erick Peterson/East Oregonian
A new book vending machine stands Friday, March 25, 2022, in the library at Hermiston's West Park Elementary School.

at all," Cooper said. "It's fun. It's exciting. Kids talk about it every time they come in, and they check it out three or four times a day, and they'll still talk about it. They're super excited."

As a book lover, Cooper said she feels happy about any project such as this that encourages reading. She is not alone in this enthusiasm.

"This is 21st century technology incentive that should be in schools," said Dave Nycz, fifth grade homeroom teacher.

He added it has a lot of appeal for kids.

"I like the fact that it displays the books and shows kids the rewards," he said. "It is manipulative. Kids love to be interactive with things. For them to perceive that token, which they earned for their reading progress, there's just something about manipulating things that brings the hype up."

Principal Kevin Headings agreed.

"I think it's a great machine," he said. "It adds a lot to our school and our reading program. I'm looking forward to seeing the enthusiasm of our students increase and their motivation to read increase."

He said that he is hopeful the vending machine will outlast the current staff at the school.

"It's going to be there long after us," he said.

'You Are Here' exhibit comes to Tamastlikt Cultural Institute

By JOHN TILLMAN
East Oregonian

MISSION — Tamastlikt Cultural Institute in February opened its first guest art exhibit since 2020.

"You Are Here," the mixed-media exhibition, curated by Sheehan Gallery at Whitman College, was created for a college course on Indigenous aesthetics. It explores themes related to place and identity. Artists exhibited are of Indigenous ancestry, drawing on personal memories and collective histories.

The exhibit at Tamastlikt, east of Pendleton, runs until May 14. Most of the art works Sheehan collected are on display. Some pieces belong to Whitman College, while others are on loan from private collections or the artists themselves.

Tamastlikt curator Randall Melton viewed "You Are Here" at the Sheehan last fall. He said he asked then if the gallery had plans for the exhibit after it was over.

"They said, would you like it?" he called.

Entering on the left wall are eight dramatic landscapes by internationally-renowned Pendleton native James Lavadour, a member of the Walla Walla Tribe. Next are seven painted portraits by Ric Gendron, who belongs to the Arrow Lakes Band of the Colville Reservation. He has exhibited at Tamastlikt before.

Three lithographs by Apsaalooke (Crow) artist Wendy Red Star follow. They merge historical photos with traditional quilt patterns. Six beadwork creations by Choctaw artist Roger Amer-



Kathy Aney/East Oregonian

This glass piece by Marcus Amerman and Preston Singletary appears in the "You Are Here" exhibit showing until May 14, 2022, at the Tamastlikt Cultural Institute, Mission.



Kathy Aney/East Oregonian

Debbie Griffith, of Boise, visits the "You Are Here" exhibit Friday, March 25, 2022, at the Tamastlikt Cultural Institute, Mission.

man are displayed in the corner, including a prominent horsehead blanket. The Whitman-educated geologist also goes by Abe-cha-ha (High Above).

Nineteen paintings by Melanie Yazzie of the Navajo Nation adorn two walls. More were installed at the Sheehan. In the center of the wall on the right as you enter are impressive glass sculptures by Roger's younger brother Marcus Amerman and his Tlingit collaborator

Preston Singletary.

"We always install exhibits carefully, but took extra care with the glasswork," Melton said.

Staff took the greatest care with the heaviest piece in the middle, a large red circle with green designs reminiscent of Mayan jade.

"We made sure that the braces holding the stand were screwed into studs," Melton added.

By the entrance are displayed fiber art pieces

constructed from wool blankets and embroidered by Marie Watt, of the Seneca Nation.

Seminole artist C. Maxx Stevens created nine dollhouse exhibits, displayed in three sets on different sides of the room. Some of them were inspired by his experiences at what is now the Haskell Indian Nations University, Lawrence, Kansas. Others move nature inside the houses.

"These appeal to me," Melton said. "In my youth, I was attracted to dioramas. With the dollhouses, you can read into them what most speaks to your own experiences."

The centerpiece of "You Are Here" is a statue, "Creation with Her Children," by Mohawk-Blackfoot artist Merritt Johnson, a mother and stepmom of six, and Tlingit-Unangax Nicholas Galanin.

"Creation" is carving her own face, letting the chips fall at her feet, where golden mannikin arms hold open the jaws of two carnivorous mammals. The artists worked with plastic tarp, fabric, cord, wood, horse hair and other materials.

Melton said he looks forward to returning to a regular program of visiting exhibits.

"We are circling back to some of the exhibits we had lined up for 2020 and 2021, but couldn't install due to the pandemic. The exhibit from the National Bison Foundation was already here, but we never took it out of its crates. We just paid shipping to send it back. We'd already paid for it."

The bison are coming later this year.

Palestinian man celebrates success of City Auto Sales

By ERICK PETERSON
East Oregonian

HERMISTON — Music, food and prizes were all part of an immigrant business owner's celebration of success Friday, March 25, at City Auto Sales, Hermiston.

Hundreds of balloons adorning the new building at 80857 N. Highway 395 for the opening of the business at its new location. There was a DJ, two food trucks and tables of pastries at the dealership. Some of the cookies had the name and logo of the business on them in icing. There were games and a large pile of prizes.

People aplenty enjoyed the music and food, and the owner was in the middle of it.

"I like this town," dealership owner Mohammed Jaber said. "When I came from my country, I came to this town. The people in this town were very nice, and I'm

happy to do business in this town."

Jaber came to this country 14 years ago from Palestine. A Tri-Cities resident, he opened businesses in Hermiston, starting with a stereo shop, selling it and then opening his car dealership.

His wife, Jasmine Jaber, was present at the celebration.

"It's exciting, especially for him, and where he came from," she said. "He came to America to build and become successful. It took him a while; it took work."

She added her husband is happy to be enjoying the fruits of his labor, and she said she is excited for him.

Meanwhile, she said, she is busy, too. A full-time mother to their six children, she said they have their hands full.

Employee Alex Wakid described the stunning growth of City Auto Sales.

He said the dealership started "very small" around five years ago. Then, he said, there was only a trailer for two offices and 40 cars for sale. There were five employees when Wakid arrived.

"With hard work and ethic, all of our employees putting in the work, we have gotten to where we are now."

Now, the dealership has 105 cars for sale on site and 13 employees.

City Auto Sales moved into its new building three months ago while its construction was in the final stages. Now, with all the work done, management felt the time was right for the party on March 25.

Other dealership employees said weather and the coronavirus also delayed the revelry.

Wakid has been with the business through much of the growth. Every day, he said, he commutes from the

Tri-Cities. He said he started as a sales manager more than a year-and-a-half ago, before being promoted to general manager.

Around for a bit longer than Wakid, Nathaly Hernandez, office manager, said she was working at City Auto Sales since the very beginning. At the start, she said, the business was just the owner and her.

"When we got here, it was just dirt," she said, as she waved her arm across a parking lot, filled with cars.

"We finally made it," Hernandez said. "We worked really hard for this, and we are so glad that it is here."

Because of City Auto Sales' success, Mohammed Jaber said he is thinking of opening a second dealership, possibly in Washington.

"You never know, you know," he said. "I hope. We'll see how things work here."

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