



# Hermiston Herald

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YOUR LOCAL NEWSPAPER

HERMISTONHERALD.COM

## Umatilla attendance, GPAs up

BY MAEGAN MURRAY  
 HERMISTON HERALD

After instituting a new attendance policy this year, Umatilla High School is experiencing one of its best semesters to date.

The new policy this year, which features home visits from school staff and a possible fine if attendance doesn't improve, has resulted in nearly 40 more students coming to school on a regular basis as compared with last year's numbers, UHS Principal Scott Depew said. Cumulative grade-point averages and the number of students on honor roll is also up at the high school.

"This has been one of our best semesters we have ever had," he said. "Things are working ... We are very encouraged by the success we are seeing in the classroom."

Depew reported to the School Board last week that about 51 students missed between 10 percent and 20 percent of school, or more than 10 days of school, through January this school year, compared with 74 students last year, and 21 students missed more than 20 percent of school, com-

SEE ATTENDANCE/A10

### TODAY'S WEATHER



Mainly sunny  
 High: 59° Low: 36°

#### OUTLOOK

- THURSDAY  
 Partly cloudy  
 High: 57° Low: 37°
- FRIDAY  
 Partly cloudy  
 High: 56° Low: 34°

A complete weather forecast is featured on page A2.

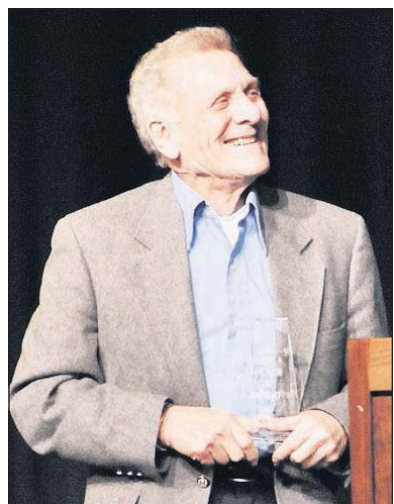


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## Community staple Chet Prior passes away at 78



EO MEDIA GROUP FILE PHOTO  
**Chet Prior accepts the Hermiston Man of the Year award during the 2011 Distinguished Citizens Award Banquet at the Hermiston Conference Center. Prior died Sunday.**

Friends remember local farmer and leader

BY MAEGAN MURRAY  
 HERMISTON HERALD

Echo resident Chet Prior wasn't one for accepting accolades or even recognition, but many felt that much is owed to the long-time regional leader.

Prior, who was actively involved in a multitude of organizations and charities throughout his lifetime in eastern Oregon and the Columbia Basin and named Hermiston Man of the Year in 2011, passed away Sunday after suffering a heart attack in Tucson, Arizona, at the age of 78.

Many described Prior as a "qui-

*"There really isn't anything positive that happened in Hermiston that he didn't have a touch in."*

— Lloyd Piercy

Echo resident and Sno Road Winery owner

et leader" and a champion for all in the region, who worked to make the community a better place for no other reason than to benefit others.

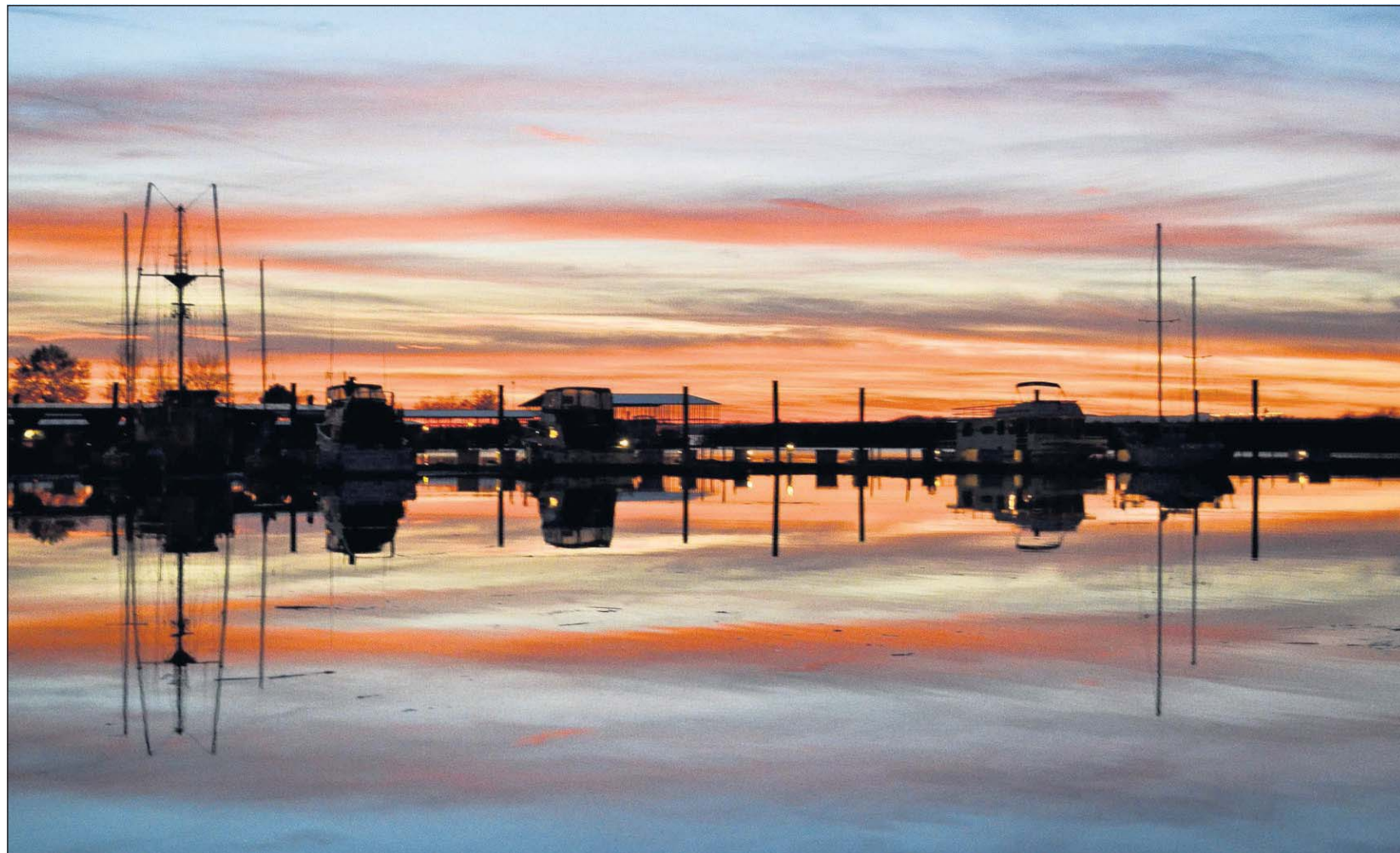
"There really isn't anything positive that happened in Hermiston that he didn't have a touch in," Lloyd Piercy, Echo resident and Sno Road Winery owner, said. "He was really low key and really humble and didn't want recognition for what he did. He was on a first-name basis with all of our

politicians. He met with the governor regularly. He was a peace maker, and there wasn't a charity here that he wasn't involved in. I am really gutted from his loss."

Prior was born in Hansen, Idaho, where he grew up on a potato, bean and alfalfa farm that was operated by his father. In the 1950s, he moved with his family to Warren, Washington, where he and his father continued to farm before

SEE PRIOR/A10

## Mirrored sunset



MAEGAN MURRAY PHOTO

A fiery red sunset reflects off the water of the Umatilla Marina Monday night, creating a perfect mirror image of the boats moored at the docks.

## Stable local housing market leads to high scores in Oregon study

Umatilla County a prime place for long-term real estate investment

BY SEAN HART  
 HERMISTON HERALD

Stable real estate market growth in the last 10 years makes Umatilla County a prime place in the state for long-term investment.

According to a recent study by NerdWallet, five Umatilla County cities were ranked in the top 10 "Best Places to Invest in Real Estate in Oregon." Bonanza, in southern Oregon, earned the top spot in the study, followed by Milton-Freewater, Umatilla, Hermiston, Weston and Pendleton.

NerdWallet analyst Kamran Rosen said a large percentage of houses in these cities increased in value in the last 10 years, despite losses in cities in other areas of the state.

"If you're looking for a stable and long-term investment, we'd say these are the places you should look to," he said. "These prices have shown consistent growth, low costs and it looks like it's good for a long-term investment."

Shirley Parsons, a real estate broker from American West Properties who was not affiliated with the study, said the local real estate market has steadily improved through the years.

"We've had continued growth,



SEAN HART PHOTO

This new home at 117 Cottonwood Drive in Hermiston is for sale near vacant lots for future development. According to a report by NerdWallet, five Umatilla County cities rank in the top 10 places to invest in real estate in Oregon.

not huge amounts like some parts of the state that then turned around and crashed," she said. "We never experienced that. We had a continuous growth over the last 10 years."

According to the study, about 64 percent of homes in Hermiston and 61 percent in Umatilla increased in value from 2004 to 2014, with all five Umatilla County cities ranking in the low to mid-60s behind Bonanza at 77 percent.

Parsons said she expects the market will continue to experience stable growth because people continue to

move to the area, thus creating a demand.

"We have a good industry base here, mostly blue collar- and agricultural-type employment in the area, which pays a good wage," she said. "The area keeps growing as far as industry and making jobs available. If people are looking to buy investment property for rentals, that's a really sound investment in my opinion. A lot of people, when they first move to

## Extension plant pathologist settling into position

Frost will perform disease research and outreach to help local growers

BY SEAN HART  
 HERMISTON HERALD

The thermometer read 6 degrees when Ken Frost left Wisconsin for his new job as the plant pathologist at the Hermiston Agricultural Research & Extension Center.

Frost, who earned his Ph.D. in plant pathology from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, officially joined the Oregon State University Department of Botany as an assistant professor and extension plant pathologist Jan. 30, but he

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