

COMMUNITY

POWER:

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that God cannot do is love you anymore than he already does.”

He said the Power Team is a faith-based ministry that performs throughout the country, and, during this trip back to the Hermiston area, he said the group already visited six schools, performing in assemblies. The Power Team will visit 600 schools in the United States this year, he said, while also putting on evening performances, like the shows that the team is doing in Irrigon that continue through Sunday.

Kopta said the show allows the group to connect with the audience to deliver a powerful message.

“We realized a long time ago, if we can get their attention, we can get into their hearts,” he said.

After a show, a girl approached him and said she had been sexually abused, beaten and was in multiple foster care homes. She told him she had been cutting herself to see if she could still feel anything and was searching for a better path.

“There’s a thousand

ways to be scarred, but there’s only one way to be healed, and that’s through the power of Jesus Christ,” Kopta said.

Rev. Rick Yardley of Columbia View Community Church, who introduced Kopta before the Power Team took the stage, said the group inspires and encourages children.

“It’s all about our kids and trying to inspire and motivate our kids to make the right choices and the right decisions,” he said. “It’s not just the churches. The communities, the businesses, the schools, they want the same thing for our kids. We’re talking about the next generation here, and anything we can do to encourage them is worth every amount of energy I can put in and every dollar I can spend.”

Yardley said a variety of local businesses stepped up to sponsor the event, and he encourages everyone to see the performance.

The Power Team will perform at 7 p.m. today and at 4 p.m. Sunday at Irrigon High School, 315 S.E. Wyoming Ave. A \$2 donation at the door is suggested. For more information, call Yardley, 541-571-2673.



SEAN HART PHOTO

John Kopta, who attended school in Hermiston, holds a phone book he tore apart during a performance by the Power Team Thursday in Irrigon. The faith-based ministry will offer daily performances there through Sunday.



SEAN HART PHOTO

John Kopta, right, speaks to a large group of people at the end of a performance by the Power Team Thursday in Irrigon. The group members show their strength and talk about the strength of God.



SEAN HART PHOTO

Hermiston High School graduate John Kopta, right, cheers on another member of the Power Team as he bends a steel rod during a performance Thursday at Irrigon High School. The Power Team will perform at 7 p.m. today and at 4 p.m. Sunday at Irrigon High School.

KOPTA:

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Power Team, with which he would establish a 30-year career. A youth pastor asked Kopta if he could acquire some props for a ministry performance, and when he saw it, he was hooked.

“I got some weights from the weight room and took them there that night and watched,” he said. “I couldn’t believe these guys were using their athletic talent to show their faith.”

Kopta joined the Power Team that same year and has since shown off his strength and spoken about God in all 50 states and 22 different countries. He has spoken at more than 2,000 schools and to more than 1 million people.

“It’s been incredible,” he said. “I actually met my wife on the Power Team in

1987,” he said. “She was Miss Oklahoma. We’ve been married 27 years and have three kids.”

At 51, Kopta said he continues to perform with the Power Team because of the impact it has on people’s lives.

He now resides in Fayetteville, Arkansas, but enjoys returning to Hermiston.

“This is like my sixth time coming back to the Hermiston area doing shows,” he said. “It’s so awesome. I stand on stage and look out into the audience and see people I went to school with in high school. I’ve not lived here for 30-plus years, but every time I come home here, it’s such a warm feeling. I love Hermiston. I love the people here. I love coming home. I just wish I was home when the watermelons were ripe.”

PARK:

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long-awaited projects out there (at Victory Square Park),” he said. “... I think we’re going to be OK and get the \$149,000 that was promised to us.”

Fetter said the restroom at the park has been closed because of graffiti and other problems, and the new cement structure — similar to one outside of Rocky Heights Elementary School — will be closer to the perimeter of the park for easier surveillance. The bulk of the funding, \$115,000, will go toward the parking lot construction, however, he said.

The city also plans to extend the parking area at Butte Park and is considering a new picnic shelter, trails and relocating the power line to make the site more attractive, Fetter said. The large grass area could also be used as a soccer field or a dog park, he said.

“It’s a big space that needs a purpose,” he said. “It’s something I’d like us to consider.”

Fetter said he is also considering Theater Sports Park as a possible location for a dog park, but the water department expressed concerns because of a nearby well.

Committee member Carlisle Harrison said someone who lived near Butte Park suggested installing a Frisbee golf course there, and Fetter said some of the undeveloped property on the butte might be suitable for such a use.

Fetter said he is encouraged by the new city ordinance that allows police officers to ban people from the park for up to 30 days for misusing park equipment. He said several people have been temporarily banned, and vandalism has decreased.

“It seems like it’s having an impact,” he said. Fetter said he would also like to update the park plan, and he plans to solicit feedback through a survey and public planning meetings.

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