

School district overcrowding a familiar problem

By **JADE McDOWELL**
Staff Writer

Hermiston School District begins school this week amid worries about having adequate space for students — a common refrain in decades of back-to-school stories in the Hermiston Herald.

The district is currently using 24 portable classrooms, with its facilities committee setting its sights on a new elementary school, an expansion of Hermiston High School and Sandstone Middle School and a renovation of Highland Hills Elementary.

When Highland Hills was built in 1980 the district was facing similar overcrowding problems, but on a smaller scale. A front page headline 35

years ago declared “Enrollment Record Shattered.” The picture accompanying it showed construction workers mingling with students after work on the new elementary school was not completely finished in time for school to start.

The story stated enrollment on the first day of school was 239 students more than the previous year, up to what was at the time a “record-breaking” 3,100 students (Hermiston School District ended the 2014-2015 school year with 5,243 students).

From the Sept. 3, 1980 article:

First day attendance produced overloads in the third and fifth grades at Sunset and in the first, fourth and sixth grades at Highland Hills.

This has created a lopsided situation in the dis-



trict, with the two elementary schools east of Highway 395 — Sunset and Highland Hills — handling about 175 more students than the two elementary schools west of the highway — West Park and Rocky Heights.

... The district's problems weren't helped any when only about half of the classrooms at Highland Hills were ready for occupancy Tuesday.

The district had hoped that all 18 classrooms at the new, \$2.5 million school would have been ready for

the start of school. But late last week school officials were informed that only 10 of the rooms would be ready on time. Part of the blame was put on a contractor who was pulled off the job and a delay in the shipment of ceiling tiles.

To accommodate the overflow of students, the district devised a last-minute plan that called for the busing of two classrooms of second graders and two classrooms of third graders to Sunset; the busing of two sixth grade classes to the junior high; and the busing of a fifth grade class to Rocky Heights.

Highland Hills Principal Harry Trump admitted things were pretty chaotic at the school Tuesday morning “but the people who were working there kept everything going.” Harry, Assistant Super-

intendent Dale Gaylord and a custodian spent Saturday, Sunday and Monday moving supplies into the new school. Teachers also gave up their Labor Day holiday Monday to help with the task.

... The remaining rooms will “definitely” be ready by Sept. 12, he said.

Hermiston History is a regular feature in the Hermiston Herald. If you have something to share about the history of the greater Hermiston area, send your submission to editor@hermistonherald.com with “Hermiston History” in the subject line. If you have a question about the area’s history you would like the Herald staff to look into, you can send your questions to the same email address with “Hermiston History question” in the subject line.

He didn't mean to buy a house; it was an accident

GARY L. WEST
SHADES OF GRAY



different communities, 12 different apartments and one rental home. Based on that track record, I've moved, on average, every two years.

I accidentally bought a house.

Well, that's not quite the right description. It was more of an impulse purchase.

I was having difficulty finding an apartment to rent. My plan was to rent an apartment or duplex on my return to Hermiston. I've been a renter my entire adult life. I justified this by the transient nature of a career in journalism. In the 26 years of my working life I have lived in seven

I further justified this in my own mind by not wanting to deal with things like yard work, or painting, or other costs, inconveniences and expenses that come with home ownership.

Two and a half years ago, a dishwasher hose in the apartment above mine in Salem came unhooked, and water started flowing out of the light fixtures and smoke detector in my apartment. It created an unsightly and drippy bulge in the ceiling of my apartment. That gave me the excuse I

needed to move out a dreary apartment I had lived in for 8 years. I just packed up and left behind the building that was falling down around me.

I fully expected to rent again on moving back to Hermiston. I had been living in a two-bedroom apartment in Keizer, Oregon, which I was paying \$800 a month to rent. As I started checking out the rental ads locally, it looked like comparably sized apartments here could be found for about \$650 to \$750 a month, which seemed quite inexpensive, compared to what I was used to paying. It was also far less expensive than the last place I rented in Palm Springs, California, where I was paying just about \$1,000 a month for a one-bedroom apartment back in 2005.

My apartment hunt hit a snag. By the time I was able to reach the apartment man-

agers of the places I was interested in renting, the units were already off the market. I even filled out a rental application at a local company that manages units for multiple rental owners. I think they had about 2 or 3 units available when I turned my application. However, they wouldn't show me the unit until my application was approved. By the time that process was completed, all their units were rented.

I had been keeping a friend posted on my housing search and he had friends who had a rental home they were preparing to sell. So, he put us together.

I liked the house and the price.

A local mortgage company pre-approved me for financing, and the next thing I knew I was making an offer on a house. The homeowners were kind enough to allow me to rent the house during the financing and appraisal process, which gave me a place to

live and a place to move my stuff in time to start my job here July 1.

I had plenty of opportunities to back out because the financing and appraisal processes took seemingly forever. We had to extend the closing twice in order to get the deal done.

But last week, just as we were putting the Aug. 19 issue of the Herald to bed, I was also sneaking out to sign a mountain of papers. I officially became a homeowner on Aug. 18, or perhaps more accurately, I became a home mortgage holder.

I have only given serious thought to buying a home twice before. Once was when I lived in Palm Springs, but I was too deep in debt at the time and home prices were climbing too rapidly to make that feasible. The other time was about 25 years ago, the last time I was living in Hermiston and editor of the Hermiston Herald.

Life is teaching me

that sometimes you get second chances in life. It also teaches me a home isn't just about a structure where you can keep your stuff, but it's about a place where you put down roots. I thought I severed my roots here long ago and transplanted myself elsewhere, but those transplanted roots never took hold. Friends and family have shown me that the roots here were still alive and still nurturing me.

So, maybe buying my first home, at age 49, wasn't really an accident at all. The seeds for that eventuality were planted long ago by family and a friendship planted right here in our famously sandy soil.

Gary L. West is editor of the Hermiston Herald and Hermiston editor for the East Oregonian. Reach him at gwest@hermistonherald.com or follow him on Twitter @GaryLWest or on Facebook at www.facebook.com/journalist.glwest.

Hermiston Herald

VOLUME 109 • NUMBER 49

GARY L. WEST
EDITOR
gwest@hermistonherald.com
541-564-4532

JADE McDOWELL
REPORTER
jmcowell@eastoregonian.com
541-564-4536

SAM BARBEE
SPORTS REPORTER
sbarbee@hermistonherald.com
541-564-4542

SEAN HART
REPORTER
smhart@hermistonherald.com
541-564-4534

KIM La PLANT
MULTI-MEDIA CONSULTANT
kplant@hermistonherald.com
541-564-4530

JEANNE JEWETT
MULTI-MEDIA CONSULTANT
jjewett@hermistonherald.com
541-564-4531

To contact the Hermiston Herald for news, advertising or subscription information:
• call 541-567-6457
• e-mail info@hermistonherald.com
• stop by our offices at 333 E. Main St.
• visit us online at: www.hermistonherald.com

ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION RATES
Delivered by carrier and mail Wednesdays
Inside Umatilla/Morrow counties.....\$42.65
Outside Umatilla/Morrow counties.....\$53.90

The Hermiston Herald (USPS 242220, ISSN 8750-4782) is published weekly at Hermiston Herald, 333 E. Main St., Hermiston, OR 97838, (541) 567-6457, FAX (541) 567-1764. Periodical postage paid at Hermiston, OR. Postmaster, send address changes to Hermiston Herald, 333 E. Main St., Hermiston, OR 97838.
A member of the EO Media Group Copyright ©2015

BREASTFEEDING CLASSES
One class covers breastfeeding benefits, pumping and much more. Come to this FREE class taught by a certified lactation consultant, and learn techniques that make for a successful experience.
Free, but please pre-register.
September 2
12:00 pm - 1:30 pm
GSMC Conference Center 3 & 4

HEALTHY FRIDAYS
Free health screenings: blood pressure checks, weigh ins, body mass index, cholesterol and glucose.
Second Friday of every month
September 11 • 2:00 - 4:00 pm
GS Conference Rooms 5 & 6
(by the cafeteria)

BABYSITTING BASICS 101
For babysitters ages 10-15. Learn childcare techniques, children's developmental ages and what to expect, basic first aid and infant and child CPR.
Sept. 12 • 9:00 am - 3:00 pm
GSMC Conference Room
\$30 - includes lunch & all class materials. Must pre-register & pre-pay.

Working every day to promote a healthy community
GOOD SHEPHERD
HEALTH CARE SYSTEM
Education and Wellness Services 667-3509
For information or to register for a class, call (541) 667-3509 or email healthinfo@gshealth.org

MORROW COUNTY FAIR “Summer Days & Country Ways” August 19-23, 2015
FAIR: www.morrowcountyoregon.com/fair **RODEO: www.morrowcountyoregon.com/fair/rodeo**
Thank you Morrow County for a great 2015 fair!
To our all of our sponsors and to all the volunteers who put in countless hours to help put on a great fair for all!
Thank you Nancy Gorham, Angie Hanson, Rhonda Hamby, Rod Taylor, Pat Tolar, Zack Lantis and Barry Munkers and Ashley Jones, and to Macy Gibbs and all the 4-H Ambassadors for your hard work and help!
Like Us On Facebook **www.facebook.com/oregontrailprodeeo • www.facebook.com/morrowcountyfairheppneroregon**

MEDICAL DIRECTORY

VISION CARE
EYE HEALTH & VISION CARE
Robert D. Rolen, O.D., LLC
Optometric Physician
115 W. HERMISTON AVE. SUITE 130
541-567-1837

URGENT & FAMILY CARE
GIFFORD MEDICAL 541-567-2995
Columbia Professional Plaza
1050 W. Elm Ave. Ste 110
Hermiston, OR 97838
• Urgent and Family Care
Weekdays 8am-6pm
Saturdays 9am-3pm
Walk-Ins Welcome
• In-House X-Rays
• Adjacent Lab

FAMILY DENTISTRY
DESERTDENTAL
Family Dentistry
~New Patients Welcome~
541-567-8161
995 W. Orchard Ave., Hermiston
Ryan M. Wieseler, D.D.S.

PEDIATRIC DENTISTRY
Call Today!
541-289-5433
1060 W. Elm, Suite #115,
Hermiston, OR
(across from Good Shepherd Medical Center)
www.apd4kidz.com
Office Hours: Mon-Fri 8am-4pm
CareCredit

URGENT & FAMILY CARE
URGENT CARE
Sports & Dot Physicals • Minor Injuries • Family Care • Minor Surgeries
We accept Medicare & some Advantage Medicare plans
NO APPOINTMENT NECESSARY
HOURS: 7:30am-7:00pm **541-567-1137** 236 E. Newport Hermiston (across from U.S. Bank)

URGENT & FAMILY CARE
GOOD SHEPHERD HEALTH CARE SYSTEM
Family Medicine
Internal Medicine
Pediatrics
Women's Health
General Surgery
Urology
The specialists you asked for...
...Right here at home.
Appointments 541-567-5305
600 NW 11th St., Suite E-37 • Hermiston • www.gshealth.org

MENTAL HEALTH
LIFEWAYS HELPING PEOPLE
• Adult, Child and Family Therapy
• Psychiatric Evaluation and Treatment
• Mental Health and Crisis Services
• Confidential and Professional Care
LIFEWAYS PENDLETON 331 SE 2nd St., Pendleton, OR 97801 Office: 541-276-6207
Crisis Phone: 866-343-4473
LIFEWAYS HERMISTON 595 NW 11th St., Hermiston, OR 97838 Office: 541-567-2536

To Advertise In The Medical Directory, Please Call Jeanne At 541-564-4531