

Hermiston Herald

FALL SPORTS PREVIEW

SPECIAL SECTION INSIDE

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\$1.00



COUNTY FAIR RESULTS

Special Section Inside



LOVE OF PHOTOGRAPHY

INSIDE HER SHOES
PAGE A8



ABOUT TOWN

Medicare 101 sessions continue this week

Area meetings about applying for Medicare and the latest updates to the program are continuing this week at free community meetings.

Presented by officials from Oregon's State Health Insurance Benefits Assistance program, the Medicare 101 sessions are 90 minutes long and include a question and answer period.

The upcoming presentations are:

- Wednesday, Sept. 2: 10 a.m., Umatilla Public Library, 700 Sixth St.; 2 p.m., Oregon Trail Library District, 490 N.W. Main Ave., Irrigon.

- Thursday, Sept. 3: 10 a.m., Stanfield Public Library, 180 W. Coe Ave.; 2 p.m., Port of Morrow, 2 Marine Drive, Boardman.

To ensure there are enough materials, RSVP by contacting 800-722-4134 or shiba.oregon@oregon.gov. Although pre-registration is requested, no one will be turned away.

For more information, visit www.oregon.gov/dcbbs/shiba.

Herald office closed Monday for Labor day

The office of the Hermiston Herald and East Oregonian at 333 E. Main St., Hermiston, will be closed Monday, Sept. 7, in observance of the Labor Day holiday.

We also have early deadlines this week for advertising to appear in the Wednesday, Sept. 9, edition. The deadline to reserve space for display ads is 5 p.m. Thursday, Sept. 3. The deadline for line ads is 3 p.m. Friday, Sept. 4.

Have a happy and safe holiday weekend.

Legislators hear correctional officers' concerns

By JADE McDOWELL
Staff Writer

Eastern Oregon legislators got a glimpse of the challenges corrections officers face on Saturday night during a meet-and-greet with the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees Council 75.

Rep. Greg Barreto, R-Cove, and Sen. Bill Hansell, R-Athena, listened to the concerns of union members working in area prisons as part of an informal event hosted by the union's conservative caucus.

After the event, treasurer Darin Davis said the caucus members wanted to bring problems to the legislators' attention, but also just let them know that local AFSCME members see eye to eye with them more than they might assume. Nationally, 48 percent of the union's members identify as conservative and in Eastern Oregon it's more than half.

"Historically labor unions have always taken a Democratic stance, but what makes us unique is our membership is primarily conservative," Davis said. "We don't want to be lumped into a party line we don't belong to."

He said the conservative caucus would like to work with everyone, not just conservative politicians, to push for better working conditions in prisons.

"Our number one concern is that at the end of the shift everyone goes home safe and healthy and happy," he said.

Davis pointed out that the average life expectancy for a man with a career in corrections is 59. Divorce, post-traumatic stress disorder and a variety of other ills are common, and Davis said it is important for politicians — and the general public — to be aware of the challenges the line of work entails.

HELP NEEDED NOW



STAFF PHOTO BY JADE McDOWELL

A sign outside Express Employment Professionals advertises the need for more skilled workers.

Lower unemployment makes positions harder to fill

As the Labor Day holiday nears, employers say finding skilled labor can be tough

By JADE McDOWELL
Staff Writer

State Employment Department records say there may be more than 2,000 people unemployed in Umatilla County, but when a Hermiston employer has a job opening that doesn't mean it's easy to fill.

Many of the job openings in the area take special skills or certifications, from a forklift operator's license to a college degree. That makes matching employers with employees more than just a numbers game.

Bryan Medelez of Medelez Trucking said the company needs truck drivers who already have their commercial license, have at least two years of experience on the road and no violations. Those drivers tend to get snatched up by bigger companies, he said.

"You want the better, responsible ones that will be on time, and we're competing



	June 2015	June 2014
Morrow	5.9	6.7
Umatilla	6.1	7.3
Oregon	5.5	7.0

Preliminary, seasonally adjusted rates.
Source: Oregon Employment Department

against people who are really established," he said.

To attract good drivers, Medelez said the company tries to offer a good benefits package, and drivers know if they stick around

they can work their way up to better pay and the company's best equipment.

He said one skill that seems to be particularly rare in Eastern Oregon is computer know-how. The five operations under Medelez Trucking's parent company take a substantial amount of IT work, Medelez said, and it is hard to find someone to hire full-time.

"Right now we're having to go find subcontractors," he said.

Medelez said the company tries all different approaches to fill job openings, from posting advertisements on Craigslist to using the services of Express Employment Professionals.

Kristin Connell, general manager of Express Employment's Hermiston office, said the types of positions the staffing company helps employers fill tends to vary by season. Right now most of the jobs the company is working to fill are labor jobs that offer something between minimum wage and \$11 an hour, but as the holiday season approaches

See JOBS, A16

Event center in doubt for 2016 county fair, Farm-City rodeo

Officials not sure the project will be ready

By JADE McDOWELL
Staff Writer

Partners in the Eastern Oregon Trade and Event Center concede the project may not be ready in time to host the 2016 Umatilla County Fair and Farm-City Pro Rodeo.

This year's fair and rodeo were billed as the last at the Umatilla County Fairgrounds, and in June the official report from project manager Frew Development was that everything was on schedule to be ready in March of 2016. But lately words like "maybe" and "probably" have been creeping into the conversation, and at Friday's meeting of the EOTEC authority board, chair Ed Brookshier addressed the question



STAFF PHOTO BY JADE McDOWELL

The newly-designed logo for the Eastern Oregon Trade and Event Center.

of holding the 2016 fair and rodeo at EOTEC.

"That is certainly what we want to do, but we all have to work together to address things that right now we don't have answers to," he said.

Brookshier said he felt the group

needed to have those answers by the end of September to give the fair and rodeo boards — and anyone else wishing to use the event center in 2016 — adequate time to prepare.

One concern is the flow of revenue, Brookshier said.

The authority is counting on revenue from government entities to come in at certain times. If any of those payments are held up, EOTEC doesn't have extra funds on hand to pay contractors and get reimbursed later.

The project has also run into snags with on-site infrastructure for water and other utilities. The bid package for site electrical work, for example, only received one bid that Frew Development is recommending the board reject.

See EOTEC, A16



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