

JOBS:

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more people will be looking for administrative support positions.

Connell said qualified forklift operators and people with a Class A Commercial Driver's License are always in high demand. Sometimes it is a certain type of work history that employers are looking for, too.

"Someone who has held

a position for five or more years, and is not hopping from job to job, that looks really good," she said.

She said when an employer advertises a job opening somewhere general instead of doing more targeted recruiting they may get a lot of responses but still not find anyone to fill the opening.

"People see a classified ad and think 'I can do that,' but they've never done it," she said.

Another way to find em-

ployees for hard-to-fill positions is through job fairs. It's one of the many strategies ConAgra Foods Lamb Weston uses to find employees. The company employs about 1,600 people in the Hermiston-Boardman area.

Spokeswoman Shelby Stoolman said the company also recruits for salaried positions from universities around the Northwest, and reaches out to veterans groups and community colleges as well. ConAgra looks to trade schools for

mechanical positions, provides on-the-job training and Stoolman said Worksource Oregon helps fill positions too.

Worksource Oregon, a partnership between the state and private employers, matches area residents looking for employment with employers recruiting for hard-to-fill jobs.

Spokesman Craig Spivey said the employment office can act as a human resources department for companies, screening re-

sumes for them to save time.

The agency has the largest jobs database in the state, known as iMatchSkills. People looking for work input their skills and certifications and then the website pulls up a list of job postings that match their qualifications.

Spivey said during the recession employers had an easier time filling positions, but now there aren't as many people looking for work.

"The labor market is tighter," he said.

According to the state employment office's last report, in June the unemployment rate in Umatilla County was at 6.1 percent — a significant improvement over June 2014's 7.9 percent but still lagging behind the state's overall unemployment rate of 5.5 percent. Umatilla County's entire labor force consists of 35,230 potential workers, of which 33,073 were employed in June.

EOTEC

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Brookshier said there are questions about whether construction of the rodeo arena, which hasn't been sent out for bid yet, will be able to be completed in time.

"These are questions we need to answer together and we need to answer quickly," he said.

Umatilla County sold Hermiston School District the current fairgrounds for \$3 million in 2012 to help pay for EOTEC, but the fair has a lease agreement with the district to use the property through the end of 2016, if needed.

Despite some delays, work does continue to move forward with the project. Gary Winsand of Frew Development reported on Friday that other than site electrical and pavement, horizontal construction is "basically completed." The footings are in for the prefabricated event center building, which has been delivered on-site, and the floor is scheduled to be poured Tuesday.

Erection of the building is now slated to start Friday, Sept. 4, a delay from a June estimate of Aug. 10.

Bids for construction of the barns were due Friday, Aug. 28, and design work for the rodeo arena is being completed by Michael Building & Design.

Bob Barton of Barton Laser Leveling, which completed grading and other horizontal construction, praised Frew Development Group for its "staunch stewardship" in keeping the project on budget.

"I feel as though Frew did a great job of managing the money for the project," he said.

Heather Cannell, the business manager for EOTEC, said she has ordered chairs, tables, office furniture and event scheduling software for the new center. She said she spent most of fair week on the fairgrounds getting a feel for the needs of the fair and rodeo and talking with people about EOTEC.

"There is definitely a mix," she said of reactions to the project. "Some people are nostalgic and don't want to leave, other people



STAFF PHOTO BY GARY L. WEST

Ground leveling has started at the Eastern Oregon Trade and Event Center site near the Hermiston airport. EOTEC was scheduled to become the new home of the Farm-City Pro Rodeo and Umatilla County Fair in 2016.

are excited for more room."

David Bothum reported to the board that this year's rodeo was a solid success, with an exceptionally high-quality roster of cowboys that included 19 of the top 20 cowboys in the world for many events.

"Each night was just like watching an NFR (National Finals Rodeo)," he said.

Board member Dan Dorran said he wanted to thank the community for its overwhelming support for the fair, especially this year when it was responsible for record-breaking

auction sales and high attendance despite overly hot and windy weather.

He said this year's fair was pushed to the limit when it came to handling electricity, water drainage and more.

"What causes that is success," he said. "It's not

because we're failing, it's because we get bigger and better."

Whether the fair moves in 2016 or 2017, fair board and EOTEC board member Don Miller said the Eastern Oregon Trade and Event Center is coming not a moment too soon, because "we're making it a reality 10 to 15 years later after we have outgrown the grounds."

"Utilities and infrastructure are almost to the point we will not be able to exist," he said.

State Sen. Bill Hansell attended the meeting and told the board that the project has been "near and dear to my heart" since he started working on the idea as a county commissioner in 1982 and he was pleased to be able to put in a good word toward the crucial extra \$1.5 million the EOTEC board got from the Oregon Legislature this year.

"My personal commitment to making this a success goes way, way back, almost as far as anybody, and now as a state senator I'm excited to help this move forward any way I can," he said.

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