

Farmers Ending Hunger unveils SAGE Center exhibit

Portland Mayor Hales makes trip for event

By **GEORGE PLAVEN**
Staff Writer

By the time 2015 draws to a close, Farmers Ending Hunger expects to donate nearly 4 million pounds of fresh, locally grown food to the Oregon Food Bank for the year.

That's a single-year record and about 1.5 million pounds more than the organization managed in 2014, but Executive Director John Burt said they can still do more.

"There's a big hunger issue in this state," Burt said. "We need people to get involved."

A crowd of 85 people gathered Saturday evening at the SAGE Center in Boardman to celebrate Farmers Ending Hunger, including Portland Mayor Charlie Hales and Oregon Food Bank CEO Susannah Morgan. The event also doubled as an unveiling for the new Farmers Ending Hunger exhibit at the SAGE Center — Boardman's visitor center and regional agricultural museum.

Fred Ziari, president and CEO of IRZ Consulting in Hermiston, founded the nonprofit Farmers Ending Hunger in 2004 after learning Oregon was, at the time, the nation's hungriest state.

Today, one in five Oregonians faces food insecurity. Ziari said he hopes the museum display will continue to galvanize Eastern Oregon farmers to help feed their neighbors.

"Just knowing this was happening in our own state was a shock to me," Ziari said. "This display will educate permanently for hundreds of thousands of people coming through here."

Farmers Ending Hunger represents a collaborative effort between more than 100 farmers, food proces-

sors and the Oregon Food Bank to deliver much-needed meals to families. On average, about 284,000 residents rely on emergency food boxes for meals. Of those, 34 percent are children.

Ziari said the organization was born not out of charity, but a labor of love. He recognized Amstad Produce for contributing 30 tons of potatoes per month; Hale Farms for contributing 25 tons of onions per month; and Threemile Canyon Farms for contributing 25-30 beef cows per month.

Enough wheat has also been donated for roughly 5 million pancakes, Ziari said. Much of that food ends up on the west side of the state, and Portland Mayor Hales said he wanted to thank those growers in person for their generosity.

Seventeen percent of Multnomah County's population is food insecure, Hales said, or about 116,000 people.

"You are right on the forefront of an issue that profoundly affects the people I work for," Hales said. "I so value the substance and the spirit of what you're doing."

Morgan, who has served as CEO of the Oregon Food Bank since 2012, emphasized hunger remains a big challenge in the state. However, the problem isn't that there's not enough food, she said, but a matter of gathering and distributing donations to the hungry.

The Oregon Food Bank stands ready to partner with Farmers Ending Hunger into the future, Morgan said.

"We will not rest until we've eliminated hunger," she said.

Saturday's event ended with a \$10,000 donation to Farmers Ending Hunger from Northwest Farm Credit Services. Non-farmers can also donate the organization's "Adopt an Acre" program.

Downtown businesses seeing more customers on First Thursdays

By **JADE McDOWELL**
Staff Writer

Downtown business owners in Hermiston have started looking forward to the first Thursday of every month.

The date is set aside for the Hermiston Downtown District's monthly open house, which draws customers with sales, refreshments, live entertainment and longer hours.

"It's been fun," said Andee's Boutique owner Brandi Howard. "It doesn't even feel like work, it's just been social."

The boutique is usually open until 5:30 p.m. but on Thursday it was open until 7 p.m. Sweaters were 20 percent off their regular price, and customers were greeted with a complimentary cookie.

Howard said people who work until 5 p.m. like coming to shop on a First Thursday when they're not as rushed.

"I know it has brought people downtown," she said. "And they spend longer in the shops."

Daniel Czayka of Alexander Daniel Jewelry Works was offering 15 percent off silver and gold jewelry and free finishing and rhodium plating on Thursday. He said the First Thursday tradition, started by the Downtown Business Association earlier this year, has been a great success that the association plans to continue in 2016.

"It drives a lot of people here," he said. "Probably 60 percent of the people I get in on a First Thursday are new."

Alexander Daniel Jewelry Works is also celebrating its one-year anniversary in Hermiston this month. Czayka said being part of the downtown district has been a good experience and he has enjoyed getting together with other Main Street business owners to plan things like First Thursday and Christmas decorations.

"I'm just looking forward



STAFF PHOTO BY JADE McDOWELL

Lights come on in downtown Hermiston as two shoppers make their way to Defining Details during November's First Thursday open house.

to next year," he said. "I hope we get more retail (downtown)."

Shannon Snyder, owner of Defining Details, echoed her fellow business owners' sentiments that First Thursday open houses were drawing extra shoppers downtown, including a lot of first-time customers.

"I think it's growing every time," she said.

Snyder said she is excited for the Dec. 5 open house, when businesses will be decked out in lights for the holidays and Santa is expected to make an appearance. If all goes well, she said, the event will also introduce people to the planned light show on the side of the old RoeMark's building being put together by the city of Hermiston's Parks and Recreation department and the Downtown Business Association.



STAFF PHOTO BY JADE McDOWELL

Pulled pork sliders were on sale for a dollar apiece at Country Gourmet & BBQ during November's First Thursday event downtown.

BRIEFCASE

Space Age Fuel wins industry award

Space Age Fuel in Hermiston was recognized by Convenience Store News for the best mid-sized remodel in the business.

The Hermiston station is the chain's flagship location.

Convenience Store News, a national magazine that publishes industry research and trends, gave the award based on several design elements of the travel center, including its separate entrance for diesel fuel customers. It also noted the fresh and nutritious ready-to-go meals for sale and the "farm-to-table" approach that keeps the convenience store stocked with fresh produce year-round.

The magazine stated Space Age Fuel updated the Hermiston location's brand by "reimaging of colors, finishes, lighting, cabinetry, fixtures, graphics and signage"

and plans to extend that to its other Oregon locations.

U.S. Bank foundation awards grant

Inland Northwest Musicians recently announced it received a \$2,000 grant from the U.S. Bank Foundation.

The money will be used for operating expenses during its 2015-16 season. Since 2008, the foundation has provided Inland Northwest Musicians with more than \$24,000 in grants.

The award was presented by Kara Taylor, branch manager of U.S. Bank in Hermiston, to R. Lee Friese, director of the Inland Northwest Musicians ensembles, during the July B2B luncheon of the Hermiston Chamber of Commerce at McKenzie Park.

Inland Northwest Musicians is a nonprofit organization whose mission is to bring live orchestral and

choral music to the communities in northeastern Oregon and southeastern Washington. The organization does not charge for its performances, but does accept donations.

For more information, contact Salli Ketchersid at ketchersid@eotnet.net, 541-314-5833 or visit www.inlandnorthwestmusicians.com.

Gym offers Veterans Day workout

A free community Boot Camp Workout is offered in recognition of Veterans Day at Higher Power Fitness.

People are encouraged to wear red, white and blue and join the crew today at 5:30 p.m. or 6:30 p.m. at 1055 S. Highway 395, Suite 202, Hermiston.

In addition, all veterans are eligible for a free month of group workouts throughout the month of November.

For more information, contact 541-289-5483 or info@higherpowerfitnessllc.com.

Family Care Health sets open house

An open house is planned at Family Care Health, a Medicare Advantage Plan, which recently moved to its new office location.

Family Care members and anyone curious about what a Medicare advantage plan is, and how it differs from standard Medicare or a Medicare supplement, is encouraged to stop by. This is especially timely with the current Medicare open enrollment period, which ends Dec. 7.

The open house is Thursday from 3-7 p.m. at 433 S. Main St., Pendleton. The office is open weekdays from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. For more information, call 541-278-3484.

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Gary L. West
Editor
gwest@hermistonherald.com
541-564-4532

Tammy Malgesini
Community Editor
tmalgesini@eastoregonian.com
541-564-4539

Sam Barbee
Sports Reporter
sbarbee@hermistonherald.com
541-564-4542

Kim La Plant
Multi-media Consultant
klaplant@hermistonherald.com
541-564-4530

Jade McDowell
Reporter
jmcowell@eastoregonian.com
541-564-4536

Sean Hart
Reporter
smhart@hermistonherald.com
541-564-4534

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: hermistonherald.com

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