

Hermiston Herald

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\$1.00



INSIDE

Winter sports
preview 2014-15

ABOUT TOWN

Free event provides Medicare information

Medicare counseling and information is available just in time for the end of open enrollment.

Free Friday Medicare Madness is Friday from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. in Conference Rooms 5-6 (by the cafeteria) at Good Shepherd Medical Center, 610 N.W. 11th St. Trained volunteers from the Senior Health Insurance Benefits Assistance office will be on hand to answer questions. They also are available throughout the year for questions. Those attending should bring a list of medications they take.

For more information, contact 541-667-3507 or shiba@gshealth.org.

Fair extends court application deadline

The Umatilla County Fair has extended the 2016 fair court application deadline.

It also was announced the program is open to all high school age students residing in Umatilla County. Previously it was open only to 10th through 12th grade students. Applications are due by Friday, Dec. 11.

Applications are available at www.umatillacounty.net/fair, the fair office, 515 W. Orchard Ave., Hermiston, all Umatilla County high schools and 4-H Extension offices. Fair staff will contact all accepted applicants to schedule interviews.

For more information, contact the fair office at 541-567-6121 or 800-700-3247 or angie.mcnalley@umatillacounty.net.

Bomb hoax leads to arrest of man

By SEAN HART
Staff Writer

A Hermiston man was arrested Monday morning after an investigation into a bomb hoax.

Hermiston Police Department officers arrested David U. Ponce, 23, Hermiston, and charged him with possession of a hoax destructive device and first-degree disorderly conduct. He was lodged in the Umatilla County Jail on \$10,000 bail.

At about 6:25 a.m., Hermiston Police Department officers were dispatched to 217 East Beebe Avenue for a report of a purported bomb inside a garbage can, according to a press release from Police Chief Jason Edmiston.

Officers arrived on scene and met with an employee from Sanitary Disposal who found a cardboard box with the words "this is a bomb" written on it inside an open garbage can that was scheduled for collection, the release states.

FILLING THE FOOD GAP



Program provides food to take home when students don't have access to school meal options

By JADE McDOWELL
Staff Writer

Heading home from school for the weekend is a happy break from classes for most elementary school students, but for some children in the community it means two days of not knowing where their next meal will come from.

"Children don't have control over their own lives," Agape House director Dave Hughes said. "We have children with parents who can't provide, and some who choose not to."

That's where the Agape House's backpack program comes into play. The pro-

gram provides a bag of easily-prepared food to the area's neediest elementary school students to take home for the weekend, filling the gap between free breakfast and lunch at school during the week.

The students are chosen by councilors at the elementary schools in Hermiston, Stanfield, Echo, Umatilla and Irrigon.

Hughes said the program started about six years ago when a local principal approached the Agape House with tales of students who would wrap up part of their school lunch on Friday to take home for the weekend, then arrive on Monday and ravenously devour their breakfast.

"Teachers and councilors say it's amazing how much better of a student kids are

when they have adequate food over the weekend," Hughes said.

The program used to use backpacks, but Hughes said it got too expensive to keep replacing the ones that didn't make it back to the schools, so now plastic grocery sacks are used. Volunteers from Altrusa International and Faith Presbyterian Church pack the bags every Thursday morning and deliver them to the schools.

At one point the program was serving 150 students a week, but that number has gone down significantly due to funding shortages. Hughes said each child gets about \$7 worth of food per weekend,

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City lights Christmas tree Thursday



STAFF PHOTO BY E.J. HARRIS

The city of Hermiston has planted a Christmas tree in the middle of Northeast Second Street near City Hall in Hermiston.

By JADE McDOWELL
Staff Writer

A tree is blocking the street next to Hermiston's city hall, but it's no accident.

The 30-foot Christmas tree donated by RDO Equipment was "planted" in the middle of Northeast Second Street by the city after workers used a jackhammer to create a three-foot deep hole in the road.

The display is part of a larger vision that includes a nightly light show set to music on the side of the former RoeMarks building. The block of downtown where the tree and light show are located will remain closed to vehicles during the month of December.

When Parks and Recreation direc-

See TREE, A16



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