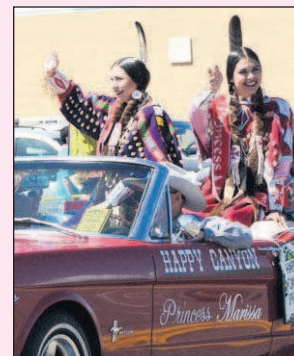




PROGRESS 2016
Building a prosperous future

SPECIAL SECTION
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ABOUT TOWN



Landing Days event runs aground for 2016

Umatilla has canceled its annual Landing Days event for 2016, but will still have a fireworks show.

Karen Hutchinson-Talaski, director of the Umatilla Chamber of Commerce, said volunteer support for the celebration of the town's history had been dwindling in recent years and there were not enough volunteers to go forward this year.

She said organizers will have a meeting in late spring to discuss bringing the full event back in 2017.

"We don't want this to go away," she said.

Hutchinson-Talaski said she has seen several events in the Hermiston and Umatilla area canceled or scaled down because of a lack of volunteers.

"It's the same problem for everyone," she said. "The same people who volunteer for everything are burned out. New people need to step up."

The live music, booths and other day-long events will be missing this year, but there will still be a fireworks show at 10 p.m. on the last weekend in June. Hutchinson-Talaski said if there is enough interest the parade might still happen as well.

She said volunteers are still needed for cleanup and parking duty. The \$3 parking fee for the fireworks show will help pay for the next year's display.

To volunteer, call the Umatilla Chamber of Commerce at 541-922-4825.

Livable Hermiston Committee hosts open house

The Livable Hermiston Committee is hosting an open house to gather in-person feedback from community members.

The event will be today (Wednesday, Jan. 13) from 4-6 p.m. in the Lanham Meeting Room at the Hermiston Public Library.

The committee has been tasked with creating a prioritized list of where Hermiston residents would most like to see the city spend money on making Hermiston a more livable place.

A survey of more than 2,000 residents revealed that residents would like to see the city spend money on a community activity center, an indoor aquatic center, an arts and culture facility, revitalizing downtown and expanding city parks and trails.

The committee encourages citizens to drop by at any time during the event for refreshments and a chat with committee members about their ideas for making Hermiston a more livable place.

LOCAL 'STARS' WALTZ AWAY WINNERS



Blaine Ganvoa performs the swing with Marina Hattan of the Utah Ballroom Dance Company.



Participants in Dancing with the Hermiston Stars take a curtain call prior to the winner being announced Saturday in the Hermiston High School auditorium.



Dan Briscoe performs the tango with Trina Morango of the Utah Ballroom Dance Company.



Cam Preus, winner of Dancing with the Hermiston Stars, works the crowd for votes during the show's intermission.

Dancing with the Hermiston Stars raises record amount for six charities

Story and photos by TAMMY MALGESINI

Community Editor

Cam Preus took a bow and then hoisted the coveted mirror ball trophy over her head as she celebrated winning Dancing with the Hermiston Stars Saturday night in the Hermiston High School auditorium.

With a melon-sized grin, Preus, president of Blue Mountain Community College, was dancing for the school's foundation, which provides scholarships for students in need.

Throughout rehearsals during the week leading up to the event, Preus said it felt like dancing to "Diamonds Are a Girl's Best Friend" took half an hour. However, once she got on stage, the two-minute routine felt like 15 seconds, she said.

"I wanted to get it done," she said about going first. "It was nerve-wracking."

Still claiming to have two left feet, Preus, credited the win to her dance partner. Seth Ward of the Utah Ballroom Dance Company, Preus said, was extremely patient in teaching her. And, the coaching continued while they quick-stepped across the stage.

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MORE INFO

Desert Arts Council

Website: www.desertartscouncil.com

Facebook: www.facebook.com/DesertArts

Utah Ballroom Dance Company

Website: www.utahbdc.com

School district leases property to city for senior center

By JADE McDOWELL

Staff Writer

Hermiston School District's board has agreed to let the city lease land for a new senior center project.

The 1.19 acre piece of property sits along Northeast Second Street behind the First United Methodist Church. It will be added to the parking lot behind the Hermiston Public Library and the stretch of road where Northeast Second Street curves around to become Ridgeway Avenue.

Hermiston Parks and Recreation director Larry Fetter said there were two potential orientations for the 8,000-square-foot Harkenrider Center — one where the district's property would house the building and one where it would be used for

a 100-vehicle parking lot.

"There is some consideration that if we build on your property we could add a daylight basement," he said.

Fetter asked the school board to either donate the property or agree to a 50-year lease at \$1 per year. District administrators recommended a lease.

Deputy superintendent Wade Smith pointed out there was precedent for the city owning a building on school district property. The current senior center on the Umatilla County fairgrounds is in that exact situation, and the city has agreed to demolish the building as soon as the lease expires on Dec. 31.

He said the property the city was requesting has a water right

and an alley right of way running through one corner, making it unsuitable for a school or other building of that size.

He said the intention was for the old Armand Larive Middle School arch on the edge of the property to be kept in place and integrated into the Harkenrider Center campus.

"It's a historic piece," he said. "The city is aware of that."

Back in 2012, the school board offered the same piece of property to the senior center board when they were trying to raise money for a new center on their own. That offer expired, but now that the city has obtained a \$2 million community development block grant to build the center on behalf of the

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