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ABOUT TOWN



COURTESY PHOTO

U.S. Rep. Greg Walden, a Republican, has represented Oregon's 2nd congressional district since 1999.

Walden to make local stops Friday

Rep. Greg Walden, R-Hood River, will be returning to his congressional district later this week, including several stops in Umatilla and Morrow counties.

After town hall meetings in Arlington and Rufus, Walden will make appearances in Boardman, Hermiston and Pendleton Friday.

According to a press release, Walden will tour the Boardman Tree Farm at 1 p.m. and the Eastern Oregon Trade and Event Center construction site at 3:15 p.m. before traveling to Pendleton to attend the Pendleton Chamber of Commerce's First Citizens Banquet at the Wildhorse Casino and Resort at 5:30 p.m.

County hears of need for new fire district

On Tuesday, the Umatilla County Commission held a public hearing on the proposed May ballot measure to combine the Hermiston and Stanfield fire districts.

No members of the public were present for comment, but Hermiston Fire Chief Scott Stanton laid out the case for the new district.

He said as calls for service in the Hermiston/Stanfield area increased but staffing levels stayed the same, the district had more instances where someone called for an ambulance and one wasn't available. On Monday, for example, he said there were 25 calls for service and two "outright delays."

"Eventually someone is going to lose their life," he said.



STAFF PHOTOS BY GARY L. WEST

A Hermiston Police cruiser leads parade a peace walk down Main Street Monday, Jan. 18, in celebration of the Martin Luther King Jr. holiday. Traffic control and participation in major city events are some of the functions the police department performs regularly.

CRIME RATE FLAT, VIOLENT CRIME DOWN

By PHIL WRIGHT
Staff Writer

Hermiston police officers initiated more actions on their own in 2015 as calls for service fell to a 10-year-low. And violent crime shifted down from the year before, but crime overall remained stagnant through 2015.

Hermiston police Chief Jason Edmiston has released his department's annual crime statistics, which measure crime across eight categories. While individual types varied, Hermiston had 524 reported crimes in 2015, just one more than in 2014. Still, that was a 35 percent drop from the city's 10-year average.

Violent crime — homicide, rape, robbery and aggravated assault — fell from 24 incidents in 2014 to 21 in 2015, however the city had its first homicide since 2012 and assaults jumped from eight to 12. Assaults are 56 percent lower than the 10-year-average, but after a low of four in 2013 are trending up. Edmiston said in the report that the department will monitor that for causation purposes.

Burglaries hit 53 last year, 22 fewer than in 2014 and the lowest in the city in a decade. Edmiston stated curbing that crime has been a focus since he became chief in 2012.

Property crime ticked up 1 percent in 2015, primarily due to an increase in larceny from 388 incidents to 413.

"Shoplifting accounts for a significant chunk of that larceny," Edmiston said. It is not unusual for officers to respond to shoplifting calls at Walmart two to three times per shift, he said.

Hermiston police also took 10,032 calls for service in 2015, almost 2,100 fewer than in 2014. Edmiston in the report stated that was concerning to him, but he was confident some of the decline has to do with tracking information that comes into the police department compared to when the city had its own dispatch center. Dispatching was consolidated with Umatilla County in 2014, Edmiston said.

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STAFF PHOTOS BY GARY L. WEST

Juan Balli of the Hermiston Police Department blocks off a portion of Main Street for the Martin Luther King Jr. parade Monday. Chief Jason Edmiston calls Hermiston Police a full-service department.



DID YOU KNOW

The following are other details about Hermiston Police from the department 2015 crime report.

- The average officer is 41 years of age and has a little less than 13 years of law enforcement experience. There are 26 officers on staff.
- Nearly one in three people in the department (30 percent) has a college degree. Four paid employees have a bachelor's degree

- and five have an associate's degree. Six staff members are currently working to continue their formal education. Three are pursuing master's degrees, one is working toward a bachelor's degree and two are seeking associate's degrees.
- The average length of time paid employees have lived in the area is just less than 22 years. There are 30 paid staff in the department and nine volunteers.
- Nearly one of every four people in the department is bilingual (23 percent).

Hermiston peace walk honors Martin Luther King Jr.



STAFF PHOTO BY E.J. HARRIS

Marchers make their way down Main Street while celebrating Martin Luther King Jr. Day on Monday in Hermiston.

Event celebrates civil rights progress, struggle

By JADE MCDOWELL
Staff Writer

Hermiston residents honored Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s legacy Monday with a peace walk through downtown and a ceremony at First United Methodist Church.

Keynote speaker Dawn Rome, one of the Hermiston Black International Awareness Club's founding members, quoted from King's famous "I Have a Dream" speech.

"Take a look at this room," she said, gesturing to the church full of black, Hispanic and white community members sitting side by

side. "This is literally the dream right here."

Though the world might be a different, less-segregated one than it was during King's lifetime, Rome said his ideals of tolerance, equality and nonviolence are still relevant today.

She asked how many people in the room had bought a lottery ticket recently with dreams of winning the biggest Powerball jackpot in history. Rome said for a week she listened to friends and family talk about the ways they could use the money for good, from buying a home for a family member to adopting children from Africa. What she wanted to know is why so many people seemed to think

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