

ABOUT TOWN

Gas prices down, but a move higher expected

Average retail gasoline prices in Oregon have fallen 7.4 cents per gallon in the past week, averaging \$2.01 per gallon Sunday, according to GasBuddy's daily survey of 1,307 gas outlets in Oregon.

The national average has fallen 2.5 cents per gallon in the last week to \$1.80 per gallon, according to gasoline price website GasBuddy.com.

Including the change in gas prices in Oregon during the past week, prices Sunday were 8.9 cents per gallon lower than the same day one year ago and are 32.6 cents per gallon lower than a month ago. The national average has decreased 19.8 cents per gallon during the last month and stands 25.3 cents per gallon lower than this day one year ago.

In Umatilla County, the average price per gallon was \$1.88 per gallon, according to GasBuddy.com.

In Hermiston, most stations were listing prices slightly higher than the county average, with \$1.919 being the most frequently reported price on Tuesday. The lowest price locally on Tuesday was the Pilot travel center in Stanfield at \$1.699. Space Age was listing a price of \$1.799. The Texaco in Umatilla had the highest price reported locally at \$2.099.

"February looks to start the month with gasoline prices averaging under \$1.80/gallon nationally, the lowest level since January 16, 2009," said Patrick DeHaan, GasBuddy.com senior petroleum analyst. "Crude oil prices have rebounded back above \$30 per barrel in the last two weeks and with more talk of an organized cut in oil output between some of the world's largest producers, there may be more upside potential in the future, should those talks pan out."

The Q to change FM frequencies

Hermiston's radio station The Q FM is moving to a new frequency this week.

The station will change from 100.1 FM to 93.7 FM sometime mid-week, depending on weather, due to a frequency reassignment by the Federal Communications Commission. The AM station, KOHU 1360AM, will not change but will be off air for a day while the work to change the FM frequency is being performed. The FM station will be off air for a couple of days, according to the station.

To promote its new frequency, The Q is sponsoring a cash giveaway of \$937. To enter listeners need to send the new frequency, 93.7 FM, and their name and phone number to The Q by Facebook (KOHU KQFM), email (kqfm@cotnet.net), fax (541-567-6068), mail (PO Box 145 Hermiston) or in person (80404 Cooney Lane in Hermiston).

For more information contact the radio station at 541-567-6500.

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HERALD FILE PHOTO

Hermiston High School graduating seniors spray one another with Silly String following the moving of their tassels at their graduation ceremony in 2014.

PRINCIPAL SEES ROOM FOR IMPROVED

GRADUATION RATES

By JADE McDOWELL
Staff Writer

Hermiston School District's graduation rates for 2014-15 were a slight improvement over the year before, but new Hermiston High School principal Tom Spoo is determined to push them much higher in the future.

"No excuses," he said. "We're not shying away from the fact that we aren't happy with our graduation rates and we are working to get them up to where they need to be."

Hermiston High School posted strong rates, with 89 percent of the class of 2015 finishing high school on time with a regular diploma compared to 74 percent statewide.

However, the district's overall rate dips below the state average to 69 percent when the Innovative Learning Center — the district's alternative school — is factored in.

Not all of the remaining students are dropouts. The state also tracks the number of students who take an extra year to finish their diploma, and the students who earn a GED or modified diploma (usually earned by special education students) within five years of starting high school. It does not track students who return to school for a sixth year or earn a GED more than five years after starting high school.

In 2013-14 the district's percentage of students who earned a regular diploma within four years was 68 percent. But a year later, an additional 10 percent of students from that class have earned a diploma or GED, bringing the district's five-year "completer" rate to 78 percent.

Spoo said no one is excited about where the district's current numbers are, but staff are determined to keep "whittling away" at everything that is contributing to students not making it out of their senior year with a diploma in hand.

One strategy the school is taking is to focus more strongly on keeping freshmen and sophomores engaged so that they don't fall behind and feel like giving up on school.

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HERALD FILE PHOTO

Hermiston High School seniors move their graduation cap tassels from the right side to the left, marking their completion of high school, during the 2015 commencement ceremony.

GRADUATION RATES

	4-year rate		5 years
	2015	2014	2015
Oregon	74	72	82
Hermiston	69	68	78
Umatilla	65	67	70
Morrow County	74	83	85
Stanfield	82	79	84
Echo	88	95	100
Ione	94	88	88

Four-year: Students who graduated on time with a regular diploma
Five-year: Students who earn a diploma, modified diploma or GED within five years of starting high school

Umatilla County Fair honors sponsors, volunteers

Fair Board introduces new manager, court and grand marshal for 2016

By KATHY ANEY
Staff Writer

Change was in the air at Saturday's Umatilla County Fair Appreciation Dinner.

"This will be the last year that the fair will be on what we all have come to know as 'The Fairgrounds,'" said Umatilla County Fair Board Chairman Lucas Wagner to diners inside a packed Thompson Hall.



STAFF PHOTO BY GARY L. WEST

Don Slone, the new manager of the Umatilla County Fair, addresses the crowd during the fair sponsors appreciation dinner Saturday night at Thompson Hall.

"It promises to be a year of traditions and transitions."

With the latter remark, Wagner segued into this year's theme: Traditions

and Transitions.

In 2017, the fair will move to a newly constructed Eastern Oregon Trade and Event Center, located on 90 acres just south of the Hermiston Airport. The site will house a rodeo arena, barns, exhibitor venues, rough stock pens and something in short supply at the current location — parking.

Fundraising Committee Chairman Dennis Barnett said the fair is moving from "a pig we've been putting lipstick on for a number of

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