



ABOUT TOWN

Take the clean water challenge

By **JADE McDOWELL**
Staff Writer

The Hermiston Altrusa Club is issuing a two-week challenge, asking Hermiston residents to only drink tap water during that time, then give the money they would have spent on sodas, coffee, tea or alcohol to the Water Project, a nonprofit that digs wells in Africa. The point is to allow people to donate without having to stretch their budget, and help people be more aware of just how prevalent clean drinking water is in their lives.

“For us, it just comes out of the tap. We don’t even have to think about it here,”

Hughes

Stephanie Hughes, chair of Altrusa’s International Relations Committee said. But in Africa, young women much trudge miles every day carrying a heavy jug of water.

“These kids are risking their lives for it,” Hughes said.

The idea for the challenge started after a member of the committee read “A Long Walk to Water” by Linda Sue Park. Hughes said it was ironic that drinking only water would be a sacrifice for Hermiston residents, while drinking that same water would be a huge blessing for people in other parts of the world.

To kick off the challenge, Altrusa International is hosting an event from noon to 2 p.m. Saturday at McKenzie Park with refreshments, giveaways and a water-carrying obstacle course. Participants will be given a Water Project wristband and a chart to track the money they are saving. A second event will also be held at the park on April 30 to celebrate everyone’s achievements and collect donations. People can also donate to Hermiston’s challenge page online at thewaterproject.org and search for Hermiston under “Find a fundraising page.”

Elementary school students in Hermiston are also being given the opportunity to participate in the challenge via an essay contest about the need for clean water in Africa, due April 22. They can get information about the essay prompts and word minimums from their school library.

Stanfield principal leaving district

Stanfield Secondary School will need a new principal next fall.

Current principal Bryan Johnson has accepted a position as assistant principal/athletic director at Ephrata High School in Washington state and will serve his last day in Stanfield on June 30, 2016. Johnson calls Ephrata his hometown.

“It is a job that I feel I am fit for and will enjoy. It may not open again for another 20 to 30 years, so it was going to be now or never possibly. We have had a great experience in Stanfield and we’ll truly miss the students, staff and community,” Johnson said in a press release.

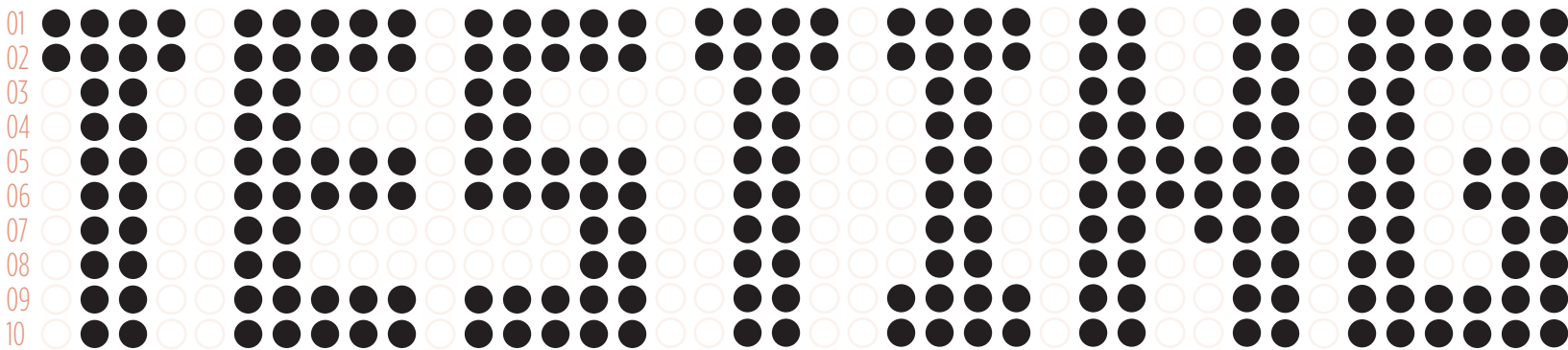
Johnson served six years at the district as a teacher/athletic director, then four years as school principal.



STAFF PHOTO BY JENNIFER COLTON

Eighth-grader Andros Mendez moves through a “spirit line” Monday morning at Sandstone Middle School. The line was one part of the school’s kick off for Smarter Balanced standardized testing.

SANDSTONE CELEBRATES



School takes pep-rally approach to Smarter Balanced testing

By **JENNIFER COLTON**
Staff Writer

Standardized testing is something to celebrate at Sandstone Middle School.

Monday, parents, staff and teachers celebrated a “kick-off” rally for the school’s 505 students, including a “spirit line” where all students received a high-fives or handshakes and were cheered as they entered school.

For about 33 percent of those students, the school day after the kickoff began with 100 minutes of testing. For the first 100 minutes of the day each day now through May, students will work through the tests to gauge skills and progress in language arts, math and science.

Given for the first time in Hermiston last year, the Smarter Balanced assessment replaces the OAKS — Oregon Assessment of Knowledge and Skills — test and measures how well students are doing under the Common Core standards. Students in grades three through eight, as well as 11th-graders, will take the test once. Students who receive a score of 3 or 4 are considered proficient and on track to graduate high school “college and career-ready.”

All Hermiston elementary schools, as well as Sandstone and Armand Larive Middle School, will complete Smarter Balanced testing this year.

Part of the challenge for educators with the new test is that results will not be available immediately. With OAKS, schools received almost immediate feedback. With Smarter Balanced, test results will not be available until this summer, even though students began testing this week.

Every sixth and seventh grader will complete four tests —

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STAFF PHOTO BY JENNIFER COLTON

Staff and parents from Sandstone Middle School made a spirit line for students on Monday morning to celebrate the kick off of the Smarter Balanced testing this week. The school is working on increasing student pride and motivation for standardized testing.

Conference center’s fate unsettled

Decision pushed to 2017 after EOTEC is operational

By **JADE McDOWELL**
Staff Writer

The city hasn’t decided what it will do with the Hermiston Conference Center or what its role will be once the Eastern Oregon Trade and Event Center opens.

The Livable Hermiston Committee was formed to answer that particular question but it is recommending the city wait and ask again late next year. The committee also came back with a report on where residents want to see the city’s money spent overall — including a possible indoor aquatic center and family/youth activity center.

“They recommended that the city step

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STAFF PHOTO BY E.J. HARRIS

The Hermiston Conference Center is a heavily used facility, but what its future will be after the main building of the Eastern Oregon Trade and Event Center is still uncertain. City officials plan to re-evaluate the Conference Center and its financial contributions to it next year.

