

Our Community

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IN BRIEF

American Legion meets monthly in Hermiston

Veterans from all eras and members of American Legion Post 37 are encouraged to attend its monthly meetings.

They meet the first Monday of each month at 7 a.m. at the Hermiston VFW Hall, 45 W. Cherry Ave.

Chartered by Congress in 1919, the American Legion provides service to veterans, current military personnel and the communities in which they reside. The nonprofit organization is committed to advocating patriotism, mentoring youth and supporting worthwhile community programs, including American Legion Baseball and college scholarships.

For more about the organization, call Bob Daniel 541-571-8227 or visit www.legion.org.

Pendleton gym open for people with special needs

Gymnasium activities are available free of charge for people with special needs and their family or caregivers

The Special Needs Open Gym runs from October through May. It's open each Sunday from noon to 1:30 p.m. at the Pendleton Recreation Center, 510 S.W. Dorion Ave.

For more information, visit www.pendletonparksandrec.com or call 541-276-8100.

Santa bikers rev up holiday cheer

By **TAMMY MALGESINI**
Community Editor

Although his 2004 Harley Wide Glide has a few more scratches, Al Sells will rev up its engine for the 13th annual Echo Toy Run.

Sells, who crashed his trusty bike three days after the 2015 event, is ready to ride again this year — bringing good cheer to kids at Good Shepherd Medical Center.

Area bikers are invited to bring an unwrapped toy and meet Saturday, Dec. 3, in downtown Echo.

Kickstands up at noon, as the bikers will cruise into Hermiston on their way to deliver toys to the hospital. The leather-clad group will be greeted by a hospital administrator and treated to coffee, hot chocolate or hot apple cider, said Nick Bejarano, director of marketing and communications at Good Shepherd.

The effort of area bikers in making a difference in the lives of kids in the community lasts well beyond the holiday season. In addition to distributing gifts to

youngsters in the hospital during the holiday season, toys are available for hospital staff to give to children throughout the year, as well as donating some to the Hermiston Police Department's Christmas Express.

Bejarano is impressed with Sells' effort to celebrate the season with his biker buddies while giving back to others at the same time.

"I think it's an amazing initiative," Bejarano said. "They genuinely care about people in the community and want to make a difference."

The idea for the toy run started when former owners of the Echo Saloon wanted to help brighten the spirits of children who were in the hospital during the holiday season. Sells has carried on the tradition and coordinates the yearly event.

More than just a bunch of bikers out for a ride, Sells said it provides an opportunity to give back to the community.

"I think it makes people feel good," he said. "It's the greatest day of the year. I get to visit with all my

friends." In case Mother Nature brings bad weather or for those who don't ride motorcycles, passenger vehicles are invited to join the end of the caravan between Echo and Hermiston.

Anyone wishing to donate a gift who can't attend the Echo Toy Run can take them to the administrative offices at Good Shepherd Medical Center, 610 N.W. 11th St., Hermiston. For more information, call Sells at 541-571-1820 or Bejarano at 541-667-3460.

Tree festival kicks off Christmas season

By **TAMMY MALGESINI**
Community Editor

What has become the unofficial kick-off to the holiday season, the Hermiston Festival of Trees is just around the corner.

A Whimsical Christmas features wine tasting, a no-host bar, dinner and a silent and live auction. People can bid on a dozen large trees, which come with a bounty of gifts, as well as 12 small trees and 12 themed baskets. Also, a silent auction includes 13 wreaths and 10 stockings. The event is at 6 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 3, beginning at the Hermiston Conference Center, 415 S. Highway 395. Tickets are \$35 each.

"It's become sort of the marquee event for the holiday," said John Spomer of the Hermiston Breakfast Kiwanis Club. "We almost have to turn people away."

The Family Day offers a variety of activities and the trees remain for viewing.

A fundraiser for the Soroptimist International of the Greater Hermiston, there is a suggested donation of \$5 per family. However, Sally Peatow, president-elect, said no one will be turned away.

The Family Day is Sunday, Dec. 4, from noon to 4 p.m., also at the conference center. The Soroptimists took over coordinating the event a handful of years ago. Peatow said it helps in bringing attention to the club, which works to improve the lives of women and girls. Money raised from the event helps fund scholarships for women in need. In addition, it's just a fun holiday event, she said.

Kids can participate in everything from decorating cookies and making ornaments and spin art to mini-manicures and tattoos to having photos taken with Santa. Also, stage entertainment helps set the holiday mood.

"Kids can make things

they can give to grandma," Peatow said. "Also, it's an opportunity for the community to enjoy the holiday season together as a family."

Money raised from the gala event is split between the Kiwanis club and the Good Shepherd Community Health Foundation. Both organizations give back to the community through, programs, donations and scholarships.

Among the themes of the majestically decorated trees are "A Merry Muggle Christmas," "Winter Wonderland" and "Starry Starry Night." Basket themes include "Sweet Treats," "A Holiday Feast," "Chute 8" and "Cabin Christmas."

"I think some people have a lot of fun," Spomer said. "It gives them a chance to be creative."

In addition to the auction, there is a raffle tree. Tickets for it are \$10 each. Money raised from it will go to a city of Hermiston art enhancement project at the

old Hermiston Union High School arch, which is located at 199 E. Ridgeway Ave.

Tickets for the auction/dinner can be purchased at the Hermiston Conference

Center. Those unable to buy tickets are welcome to come for the auction to bid on items. For more information, visit www.facebook.com/hermistonfestivaloftrees.

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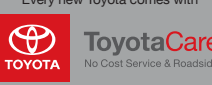
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