

FOOD:
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families they could be distributed to. In 1979, Sherman got students at Armand Larive involved in the food drive effort. Admittedly, Sherman had low expectations that first year, thinking maybe they'd collect 80 or 90 cans. However, he was pleasantly surprised when donations topped 800. When Sandstone opened, Sherman

helped develop the competition between the schools. "The biggest contribution of food to this program is the schools," Sherman said. "Our kids are really great kids." DeCarlow said the can drive is important as it's a way for students to be aware of needs in the community. It also helps drive home an understanding that they can contribute and help make a difference. Sherman is continually amazed by the generosity

of students and families that have very little themselves. It still touches him when he recalls a former band student that brought in two cans. "They were usually going hungry," Sherman said. "They know what it's like to go without." Top collectors will earn the privilege of attending a special Hermiston Rotary Club luncheon with their principal and sit at the table of honor with Mayor Dave Drotzmann. The meeting also

features a "fleecing," Sherman said. Rotarians willingly open their wallets to provide seed money for next year's Christmas Express. Roberts encouraged students to talk to their families about making a food donation. "We're not asking you to strip your pantry," she said. Meanwhile, don't be surprised if an exuberant youth shows up at your door asking if you'd like to donate food for the effort — remember, there is a contest

going on. The competition continues through Dec. 9. "That's one of the things they take pride in — that Armand has been the winner of the crosstown rivalry with Sandstone in recent years," DeCarlow said. "Also, with some of the kids their siblings had won, so it's passing on the torch to be victorious over the other school." In the end, Sherman said the recipients are the winners. Recipients of Christmas Express don't sign

themselves up. Names can be suggested through social service agencies, civic groups, churches or even neighbors, Sherman said. They must be submitted by Dec. 2. For more information, call Hermiston Police Chief Jason Edmiston or Rev. Terry Cummings, lead chaplain with the Hermiston fire and police departments, at 541-567-5519 or leave a message for Sherman at Umatilla Fire District No. 1, 320 S. First St., Hermiston.

BUILDING:
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Simmons Insurance Group held a ribbon-cutting on their new headquarters Tuesday. "This is our hub. This is our home," managing partner Jacob Neighbors told the group gathered for the celebration. Simmons Insurance Group was founded in Hermiston in 1974 and has since grown to about 100 employees in 20 locations. Hermiston is still the company's headquarters, however, and almost half of the employees are there.

Neighbors said the move to the bigger space for administrative offices will allow for continued growth. Managing partner Justin Simmons thanked those who transformed the former western wear store into an open, modern-looking workspace. He said helping fill the long-empty building was important to him and to his brother-in-law Neighbors because they had grown up in the community. "We're really excited," he said. "What we wanted to do was revitalize Main Street." The building was first built in 1907, the same year

Hermiston was incorporated, and had previously served as a public library, a ladies' boutique and the offices of the *East Oregonian* before Roe Gardner turned it into RoeMarks. The Simmons Insurance offices take up the eastern section of the large property, while Bloomz Coffee and Floral will move into the corner space early next year. The Simmons side includes a spacious open area on the first floor, a waiting area, board room, staff kitchen and a variety

of glass-fronted offices surrounding the main floor and the upstairs mezzanine. The renovations included bringing natural lighting to the mezzanine by adding a row of upstairs windows facing Main Street. The Hermiston Urban Renewal Agency provided a \$10,000 facade grant as a match for the \$21,000 it took to put windows into what was previously a solid concrete wall. Assistant city manager Mark Morgan said the city was pleased to award urban renewal district dollars to

Simmons Insurance Group for turning one of Hermiston's few second-story spaces downtown into a usable space. "We're very excited about the commitment by Simmons Agency to invest in the downtown, and we hope that it leads many more to follow suit," he said. Neighbors said to start out 15 people will have their offices in the building, while others stay at the 702

E. Main Street address. He said "so far everything has gone to plan" in finishing the renovations. "It's been a great space for us," he said. The office will be open 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday. "Feel free to stop in and say hi and check out the new digs," Neighbors said. Contact Jade McDowell at 541-564-4536.

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STUDENT OF THE WEEK

Garrett Wiggins
ECHO HIGH SCHOOL

Garrett Wiggins is a sophomore at Echo High School who demonstrates true dedication towards his academics, community, and activities. Garrett is an outstanding student who always brings his positive attitude, strong work ethic, and inquisitive mind into his daily learning. Citizenship is important to Garrett, and he is always willing to lend a helping hand and volunteer within his school and community. Garrett is very involved at Echo High School, actively participating in FFA, athletics, Key Club, Knowledge Bowl, and serving as an ASB Officer.

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NOV 25-NOV 28

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