

Desert Arts Council unveils 'Dancing with the Stars' lineup

By **JADE McDOWELL**
Staff Writer

Six of Hermiston's local dignitaries will be getting their groove on in January at the fifth annual Dancing with the Hermiston Stars.

Bill Elfering, Clara Beas Fitzgerald, Eva Swain, Greg Smith, LuAnn Davison and Spike Piersol will be pairing up with professional dancers to compete for the mirror ball trophy and raise money for charity.

The event, put on by the Desert Arts Council and sponsored by the Hermiston Breakfast Kiwanis Club, will take place Jan. 14 at Hermiston High School at 7 p.m.

The first half of the evening's performance will feature the stars and their partners from the Utah



Elfering



Fitzgerald



Swain



Smith



Davison



Piersol

Ballroom Dance Troupe competing before a panel of judges. Audience members can vote too, using their ticket stubs and cash donations to the charity of performers' choice. After intermission the dance troupe will perform a collection of ballroom dance routines.

Event coordinators Mary Corp and Karen Davis said in a news release that

Hermiston Dancing with the Stars has become a favorite event in the Desert Arts Council's lineup that everyone looks forward to.

Performers for the 2017 season:

• Bill Elfering is a Umatilla County Commissioner from Hermiston. He graduated from high school in Vale and played on three state champion football

teams there. Money raised by his performance will go to Pregnancy Care Services.

• Clara Beas Fitzgerald is a Hermiston city councilor and serves on various volunteer boards, including the Hispanic Advisory Committee and Oregon Commission for Women. Her performance will raise money for the Umatilla

Morrow Hispanic Scholarship Foundation.

• Eva Swain is a business owner who moved to Hermiston in 1976 with her husband Harley Swain to start a car dealership. Today Harley Swain Subaru is still family-owned and carries the name of Swain's late husband, who died in 1978. She is raising money for the Hermiston Senior Center.

• Greg Smith represents District 57, including the greater Hermiston area, in the Oregon State Legislature. He has served in the House of Representatives since 2000. His performance will raise money for the Hermiston Warming Station.

• LuAnn Davis is a Hermiston business owner and community volunteer. She is the current president

of the Altrusa Club and a State Farm Insurance agent. She is raising money for Campus Life.

• Spike Piersol is a retired Hermiston firefighter and EMT who stays busy with volunteer work and sometimes serves as one of Santa's elves. He is raising money and awareness for the First Responder Memorial in McKenzie Park.

Tickets are \$20 for adults and \$10 for children under 18. They can be purchased in advance online at www.desertartscouncil.com or at the Hermiston Chamber of Commerce or Hermiston Parks and Recreation office. For more information call 541-667-5018.

Contact Jade McDowell at 541-564-4536.

New reporter joins Hermiston office

Hermiston Herald

Reporter Jayati Ramakrishnan joined the *Hermiston Herald* and *East Oregonian* on Monday as a reporter in the Hermiston office.

She will cover education and public safety for the two publications, as well as general assignment duties.

Ramakrishnan comes to Eastern Oregon after spending two years as a reporter at the biweekly *Curry Coastal Pilot* in Brookings, the southernmost town on the Oregon Coast. She has covered education, ports, city and county government and worked as a copy editing assistant. She also enjoyed writing feature

stories and profiles of the town's residents.

After two years on the coast, Ramakrishnan wanted to broaden her experience and learn about the issues in a different part of the state. She was drawn to Umatilla County for its proximity to the Columbia River and its plethora of hiking opportunities.

A lifelong Oregonian, Ramakrishnan was born in Portland and graduated from the University of Oregon in Eugene, studying journalism and psychology. She said she is eager to explore a new part of her

home state, and get used to the extreme weather.

"I like the idea of getting to be a true Oregonian," she said. "I've experienced urban and coastal Oregon, but there's much more to see in this state. I'm looking forward to the new adventure."

Ramakrishnan fills the position most recently held by Alexa Lougee, who accepted a teaching position with Umatilla School District earlier this fall. Ramakrishnan can be reached by email at jramakrishnan@hermistonherald.com or by phone at 541-564-4534.



Made to Thrive gets holiday donation

By **JADE McDOWELL**
Staff Writer

More of Hermiston's underprivileged students will get a chance to play sports next year after three local businesses donated gear to the nonprofit Made to Thrive.

The organization, which started in Hermiston three years ago, provides the fees, equipment, transportation and other support for students from needy families to be able to participate in extracurricular activities.

U.S. Cellular, Wal-Mart and Obie's Coffee donated boxes of sports equipment and athletic wear as well as money to Made to Thrive on Friday, just in time for Christmas.

U.S. Cellular representatives said the aim of the donation was to help students in the community, but also to help bring more visibility to the charity and encourage others to contribute their own donations or volunteer power.

"At U.S. Cellular, we aim to give back to our local community and what better



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO BY U.S. CELLULAR

Made to Thrive volunteers help unload donations made by U.S. Cellular, Wal-Mart and Obie's Coffee.

way than helping children find productive and fun outlets after school," Erryn Andersen, director of sales in the northwest region, said in a news release.

Kriss Dammeyer, founder and director of Made to Thrive, said the boxes donated filled two tables.

Some of the items will be used for holiday gifts for participating children, while basics like socks, granola bars and water bottles will be given to volunteers to send with their students when they drop them off at practices and classes. Dammeyer said students participating in Made to Thrive

often show up to sports practices in worn-out shoes with no socks underneath.

"We don't like to send them out to an activity hungry and unprepared," she said.

Two laptops that were donated will go to high school students served by Made to Thrive who are working hard to better themselves.

Currently Dammeyer has about 35 regular volunteers and serves 300 students. The community support means a lot, she said.

"It was really neat to see multiple businesses come together," she said. "When people come together great things happen."

She said the organization's volunteers are what make Made to Thrive possible, and they could always use more with "a heart for kids."

For more information visit madetothrive.org or call Dammeyer at 541-571-6169.

Contact Jade McDowell at 541-564-4536.

EOTEC met \$2 million goal in 2016

Additional funds raised will go to lights, seating in new arena

By **JADE McDOWELL**
Staff Writer

If anyone is looking to squeeze in one more tax write-off before the end of 2016, the Eastern Oregon Trade and Event Center fundraising committee is happy to help.

Committee chair Dennis Barnett said the committee did meet its goal of raising \$2 million for the new fair and rodeo grounds outside of Hermiston, but since bids came in higher than anticipated there are still plenty of needs that could be met with more donations.

"I will take money any time," he said.

Barnett said the committee raised "a little over" \$2 million through 2016, and recently two anonymous donors announced they will match up to \$200,000 of new donations to EOTEC through the nonprofit Friends of the Fair and Rodeo. The project needs an extra \$400,000 to add lighting to the rodeo arena and

restore the seats that were cut when bids for the project came in over budget.

Barnett also said that there were a few \$25,000 grants that the committee applied for that will be awarded in the first part of 2017, so there might be some more money coming in through that.

Several of the largest donations made in 2016 came from corporations, Barnett said, but there was also an individual who donated \$100,000. Many of the year's donations were in \$25,000 increments from businesses and private citizens.

"It was really a cross section," he said.

One thing most of EOTEC's donors have in common is geography. Barnett estimated 98 percent of them were from the west

end of Umatilla County. He said it was disappointing that there wasn't more support from the other end of the county for a project that will benefit 4H and FFA kids from all over the county, not just Hermiston.

Barnett said somewhere between a third and half of the dollars donated will be financed through Banner Bank, allowing donors to make multiple payments instead of handing over all the cash upfront. Barnett said the community should feel proud of the generosity showed this year toward EOTEC.

"Any time you can raise \$2 million in five months, that's pretty amazing," he said.

For more information call Dennis Barnett at 541-567-5215.

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21st Annual Christmas Spirit Award Presentations


The Good Shepherd Community Health Foundation is pleased to announce Cathy Putnam and Virginia Miller as the 2016 Christmas Spirit Award Winners.



Cathy's importance to the Eastern Oregon Mission and its two outreaches, Agape House and Martha's House, is priceless beyond monetary value. She serves as a member of the board of directors and has been a past president, guiding these outreach organizations to greater levels of success. Her leadership and support is a major reason this organization continues to serve those in need within our local communities.

Cathy may be found many mornings, prior to her work schedule, visiting the residents of Sun Terrace. Many just want to talk and have someone to listen. She is an exceptional listener and cheerfully interacts with the residents to make them feel comfortable.

It is for these reasons that the Good Shepherd Community Health Foundation, which strives to make our community a better place to live, has selected Cathy Putnam as a 2016 Christmas Spirit Award recipient.



The Good Shepherd Community Health Foundation is pleased to honor **VIRGINIA MILLER** as a recipient of the 21st Annual Christmas Spirit Award.

This award is given to one who exemplifies the spirit of Christmas by giving of themselves to others all throughout the year.

Virginia is a beacon of generosity and blesses our community with her example of service and long term dedication to the growth and prosperity of the Hermiston and surrounding areas.

She has volunteered with integrity and extensive service on projects with Altrusa International of Hermiston, the Board of Realtors, and the Umatilla County Department of Land Use Planning.

Most recently, Virginia is a dedicated meal preparer at the Open Table for First United Methodist Church. She shops for, plans, and serves hot meals 2-3 times per month for Hermiston's most needy individuals.

Virginia is always the first to volunteer and assist in any way to improve the lives of those around her. Her benevolence, caring attitude, and enthusiasm for life is infectious to those around her with hope and a desire to move forward.

She has blessed our community with many years of service and is held in high regard by those with whom she comes in contact. She participated in the Ford leadership program and was an active participant in the repurposing and repair of the Umatilla Community Center.

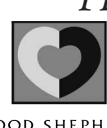
It is for these reasons that the Good Shepherd Community Health Foundation, which strives to make our community a better place to live, has selected Virginia Miller as a 2016 Christmas Spirit Award recipient.

The Good Shepherd Community Health Foundation is proud to recognize **Cathy Putnam** and **Virginia Miller** as the 2016 Christmas Spirit Award winners.

The Foundation mission is to enhance the quality of life and general health of residents living in West Umatilla and Morrow County communities by raising funds and giving to community projects. Good Shepherd Community Health Foundation reviews funding requests and makes awards for worthwhile projects twice a year. The next deadline for submitting grant applications to the Foundation is January 31, 2017.

Groups or individuals interested in making a donation or being considered for funding are encouraged to call the Foundation office at 667-3419.

Best Wishes For A Happy Holiday Season.


GOOD SHEPHERD COMMUNITY HEALTH FOUNDATION