



Hermiston Herald

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\$1.00

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BRIEFLY

Educators of the year

Hermiston Herald

The Hermiston School District has selected a handful of standout teachers for its annual "Educators of the Year" awards, which will be presented at the Jan. 23 board meeting.

Awards went to one teacher from each of Hermiston's five elementary schools and two middle school, and two from Hermiston High School. An award was also given to one district employee. One of the teachers will be selected as teacher of the year and announced at the Distinguished Citizens Award Banquet on Feb. 1.

The school district will also recognize its administrator of the year at the Jan. 23 board meeting.

A list of award winners is below:

- District: Linda White, instructional coach
- Hermiston High School: Susie Cobb, Family and Consumer Sciences; Ericka Keefauver, instructional coach
- Armand Larive Middle School: Tate Enright, Special Education
- Sandstone Middle School: Kimo Gabriel, Science
- Desert View Elementary: Garth Lind, fifth grade
- Highland Hills Elementary: Mark Douglass, Music
- Rocky Heights Elementary: Jolene Davis, second grade
- Sunset Elementary: Joyce Barak, Title One
- West Park Elementary: Margaret Gutierrez



GREG SMITH & TRINA MORAGO
DANCE: THE PASO DOBLE
MONEY RAISED: \$4,184



LUANN DAVISON & ANTHONY WHIPPLE
DANCE: CHA CHA
MONEY RAISED: \$3,959



EVA SWAIN & ALEX GAVIN
DANCE: THE TWO-STEP

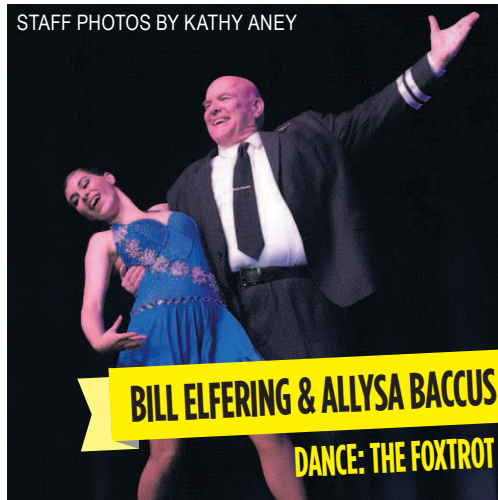
DANCING STARS

BRING IN THOUSANDS

STAFF PHOTOS BY KATHY ANEY



SPIKE PIERSOL & GRACE JOHNSON
DANCE: THE TANGO



BILL ELFERING & ALLYSA BACCUS
DANCE: THE FOXTROT



CLARA BEAS-FITZGERALD & JOEY WILLIAMS
DANCE: THE POLKA

By JAYATI RAMAKRISHNAN
Staff Writer

Hermiston saw a lot of star power on Saturday night, when six local business and community leaders competed for the title in the fifth annual Dancing With the Hermiston Stars event.

State Representative Greg Smith took home the top prize, dedicating his winnings to the Hermiston Warming Station. Local businesswoman LuAnn Davison was the runner-up, with her funds going toward Hermiston Campus Life, a mentorship and Christian organization for local teens. The other contestants were city councilor Clara Beas-Fitzgerald, county commissioner Bill Elfering, retired firefighter Spike Piersol, and business owner Eva Swain.

Smith and his partner Trina Morago danced the Paso Doble, with a "Buffy the Vampire Slayer" theme. Davison and her partner Anthony Whipple danced the Cha Cha with a hard rock twist — to AC/DC's "You Shook Me All Night Long."

The six contestants raised a total of \$11,347 for their charities — though earnings for each charity have yet to be announced. Last year the event raised about \$15,000 for charities, event director Mary Corp said.

The two highest earners were Smith, who raised \$4,184 for the Warming Station, and Davison, who raised \$3,959 for Hermiston Campus Life.

"This is the second highest amount we've raised, after last year," Corp said. "We're very pleased."

The contestants faced a panel of judges — Phil Hamm, Erika Sandoval and Tyler Hansell — who scored them based on skill, enthusiasm and audience engagement. The final scores were taken from a combination of audience votes, judge scores and funds raised by each individual for their charity of choice.

Each pair filmed a video segment, which was played prior to their performance. The clip showed footage of the pair training, as well as the contestant discussing their charity.

Piersol, who along with his partner Grace Johnson, danced the tango, and raised money for the First Responders Memorial. Judges appreciated Piersol's intensity and passion during the dance.

"You were very light on your foot," Hansell teased the retired firefighter, who has a prosthetic leg.

Swain, who danced the nightclub two-step with her partner Alex Galvan, raised money for the Hermiston Senior Center, which is trying to build a new facility.

"It will take a lot of money to build a new center," Swain said. Judges admired Swain's poise on the dance floor, as well as her chemistry with her partner.

Elfering and his partner Alyssa Baccus danced the Foxtrot, to Frank Sinatra's "Come Fly With Me."

'THIS IS THE SECOND HIGHEST AMOUNT WE'VE RAISED, AFTER LAST YEAR. WE'RE VERY PLEASED.'

— EVENT DIRECTOR MARY CORP

See DANCE, A14

Police train to handle mental health issues

By JAYATI RAMAKRISHNAN
Staff Writer

Police officers in Hermiston deal with dozens of calls a day — and those calls sometimes involve a person going through a mental health crisis.

Hermiston police chief Jason Edmiston said while handling mental health cases isn't typically in police officers' job description, it seems to have become one of their daily tasks.

"The concept of 'throw more training at the police' instead of looking at the problem," Edmiston said. "We're trying to address the problem as best as possible."

Edmiston said one of the biggest challenges is diagnosing a problem, and then directing the person to the correct place for help.

"It's a growing problem," Edmiston said of cases related to mental

health issues or short-term mental health crises. "I think substance abuse plays a role in people in crisis. But mental illness being hereditary — that's in play. As Hermiston grows, more people come through the area and our calls for service increase."

Edmiston said while the long-term solution to mental health issues should not be police response, his officers have undergone Crisis Intervention Training for when problems arise.

The training helps officers learn about various issues related to mental illness.

"It's a 40-hour course that varies depending on feedback from the previous one," said Hermiston Police Captain Travis Eynon, the department liaison for the training.

About three-quarters of department staff go through the training, Edmiston said. The course covers drug and alcohol abuse, military trauma and post-traumatic stress disorder, drug-induced psychosis and other mental health issues officer might encounter on calls.

"(The training) identifies what those issues are, and gives (officers) tools for how to deal with people experiencing them," he said.

Edmiston said the officers learn to talk to people going through a mental health crisis, rather than talking at or down to them.

"We expect them to diagnose what's going on in a matter of seconds," he said, adding that a situation



Edmiston

See TRAINING, A14

