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BRIEFLY

Spoo picked as top admin

The Hermiston School District revealed its “Administrator of the Year” award at Monday’s meeting.

Hermiston High School Principal Tom Spoo was surprised when his family stepped out from behind a door to help him celebrate his win.

Spoo, who has been with the Hermiston School District for 23 years, spent 13 years teaching agriculture at the high school and has served as an assistant principal and principal at the high school, as well as principal of Armand Larive Middle School.

Superintendent Fred Maiocco praised Spoo’s ability to support and encourage his staff.

“People would apply to work there just to be a part of his team,” Maiocco said. He also lauded Spoo’s collaborative skills, and his development of the Career Technical Education program at the high school.

Student-made mosaic of Hermiston landmark up for bid

By **TAMMY MALGESINI**
Community Editor

For three years, groups of fifth graders from Highland Hills Elementary School pounded away on a mosaic art project depicting a local landmark.

Art teacher Patrick Temple said students particularly enjoyed “breaking days” while working on “A Portrait of the Hermiston Butte.”

“Students used hammers and lots of enthusiasm in smashing plates, tiles and cups to be used in the mosaic,” he said.

The approximately 3-foot by 5-foot piece will go to the highest bidder during the Feb. 4 Hermiston Education Foundation Beach & Beef Dinner and Auction. Temple called the mosaic an “heirloom” piece.

“We’re pretty excited to have that as one of the major auction items — it’s beautiful,” said Tori Espinosa, treasurer of the Hermiston Education Foundation. “It’s neat that he’s getting these students more involved in the arts at an earlier age.”

In his 13th year in the Hermiston School District, Temple has worked on two other mo-

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Above: A close-up of the mosaic project shows pieces of plates and glass used to create the sky above the Hermiston Butte.

Top: A three-year mosaic project created by groups of Highland Hills fifth grade students will be up for bid during the Feb. 4 Hermiston Education Foundation Beach & Beef Dinner and Auction.

BEACH & BEEF DINNER AND AUCTION

A fundraiser for the Hermiston Education Foundation, the Beach & Beef Dinner and Auction is Saturday, Feb. 4.

The doors open at 5 p.m. at the Hermiston Conference Center, 415 S. Highway 395. People can view silent auction items and socialize with others. A no-host bar will be available. The dinner of beef and crab will be served at 6:15 p.m. The live auction will follow.

Money raised from the event is used for grants awarded each fall and spring to staff

of the Hermiston School District. The group funds projects to enhance the educational experience of students in the district. Over the years, projects have funded the purchase of musical instruments, field trips, technology equipment, special curriculum and books.

Tickets are \$35 each and are available in advance at the conference center, the district office, 305 S.W. 11th St., or at www.squareup.com/store/hef.

For more information, call 541-567-5215.

Crime trending down, with two exceptions

By **JAYATI RAMAKRISHNAN**
Staff Writer

Crime’s downward trend in Hermiston continued in 2016, according to statistics released by the police department, despite a couple of upticks in violent crime.

Police Chief Jason Edmiston said the two categories of crime that increased were rape and aggravated assault — the number of rapes increased from four in 2015 to seven in 2016. Aggravated assault numbers increased from 12 in 2015 to 20 in 2016. Edmiston said because numbers of both have been fairly low in Hermiston, a few instances can skew percentages.

“Obviously one rape is one rape too many,” he said. “With the rapes last year, all participants were known to one another, and there

was no random crime. Three of them were consensual but age was a factor.”

With aggravated assaults tracked last year, Edmiston said 57 percent of the incidents were domestic-related, 43 percent involved the use of a controlled substance, and only one incident was definitively identified as gang-related.

There are statistics provided for eight types of crime on the annual report: homicide, rape, robbery, aggravated assault, burglary, larceny, auto theft and arson.

Edmiston said the department prefers to look at crime over a longer period of time.

“Crime can be very cyclical,” he said. “When it comes to identifying trends, we feel it’s more appropriate to look at 10-year periods.”

Overall, he said, crime rates have been comparable to last year, decreasing 2 percent overall from 2015. “There have been some unfortunate incidents, like the murder-suicide last year, but it’s relatively flat.”

He said over the past 10 years, total crime is down 32 percent, even though the population of Hermiston has increased 15 percent during that period.

Edmiston said officers have several strategies for addressing crime in Hermiston. They look at statistics throughout the year, posting quarterly reports, looking for trends, and redirecting funds if one area needs more attention.

“If we see trends causing us concern, we can and we have in the past adjusted our resource allocation,”

he said.

While the department has already undergone restructuring this year, and will not make any changes directly related to the 2016 statistics, Edmiston said he hopes some of the impending changes, including the addition of another detective — will help address overall crime.

“We hope that extra person will also provide our detective a little more time to be proactive, and spend a little more time investigating,” he said.

He said while it’s hard to be proactive with personal crimes, like rape, officers try to prevent crime by focusing on repeat offenders.

“Most criminals don’t become criminals overnight,” he said.

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