



# Hermiston Herald

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 8, 2017

HermistonHerald.com

\$1.00

INSIDE

## STUDENTS DISCOVER JOY OF

# READING

Area schools celebrate Read Across America by putting focus on fun

By **JAYATI RAMAKRISHNAN**  
Staff Writer

“The more that you read, the more things you will know. The more that you learn, the more places you’ll go.”

Millions of elementary school children took those words from Dr. Seuss’ famous book “Oh, The Places You’ll Go!” to heart last week, with the festivities from Read Across America, an annual celebration commemorating Seuss’ birthday of March 2, 1904.

The author of more than 60 children’s books including “The Lorax,” “The Cat in the Hat,” and “How the Grinch Stole Christmas,” Seuss, whose real name was Theodore Geisel, captivated readers with his stories and memorable characters. Some were mischievous and lighthearted, some were grouchy and some carried a powerful message. But many inspired a love of reading in children — something the program aims to encourage long after Seuss’ death.

“It seems like the love of reading has found its way out of schools,” said Kevin Headings, principal of West Park Elementary School. “There’s much more of a technical focus to teaching reading — more focus on testing, Smarter Balanced.”

Headings said while the technical aspects of reading are important, the other side is important, too.

“When I was in school, teachers would read aloud, making reading fun for the kids,” he said. “We don’t do enough of that anymore. Encouraging that love of reading — that’s what Read Across America is about.”

Headings said classes at West Park participated in dress-up days and reading challenges or competitions. On Friday, he said, the school conducted a read-in, where students can bring pillows and blankets and the entire school will read just for fun.

Long-term, he said, the school has followed the lead of Sunset Elementary School, and is now holding family read-ins. The first

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PHOTO BY E.J. HARRIS

Students gather by class and read in groups on the floor of the gymnasium Thursday at Rocky Heights Elementary School in Hermiston.



PHOTO BY E.J. HARRIS

Students read in a classroom on Thursday at Rocky Heights Elementary School in Hermiston.

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### BRIEFLY



## Favorable school bond sale saves money

Hermiston Herald

A successful bond sale for Umatilla School District will translate into fewer taxes for Umatilla residents.

The rate on the bonds, which will pay for expansions and upgrades at Umatilla schools, was more favorable than expected, meaning taxpayers will pay about \$2.77 per assessed value instead of \$3.13. That rate will begin when the current Umatilla High School bond is paid off in 2023 and will continue through 2035.

High demand also turned into higher net proceeds for the school district, which will have \$10.8 million instead of the expected \$10.2 million to work with.

The bond sale was signed last week, and the school district is now in the planning phase. The district expects to make drawings available sometime this spring and will solicit public feedback then.

Superintendent Heidi Sipe said in a statement that the district was excited about the favorable sale and committed to being good stewards of the money.

“We appreciate the community support and will continue to do all we can to honor the community funds with careful management,” she said.

## Fire station now open 24/7



STAFF PHOTO BY E.J. HARRIS

Umatilla County Fire District 1 is now has full-time staffing at its Fire Station 22 at the intersection of East Punkin Center and Diagonal Road east of Hermiston.

By **JAYATI RAMAKRISHNAN**  
Staff Writer

Firefighters spent the first full-day shift March 1 at Fire Station 22 setting up the building and getting systems up and running.

It was a quiet day, but significant as the station at the intersection of East Punkin Center and Diagonal Road moves into 24/7 mode.

“The station will provide service to a lot of people,” said Corey Gorham, battalion chief for Umatilla County Fire District 1. “The majority of the population in rural areas are out this way,” he said, while looking at a map of the district’s service area.

The station is northeast of town, about halfway between the downtown fire station and Hat Rock State Park.

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