



Members of Altrusa International of Hermiston have fun while enjoying lunch on the way to a 2012 conference event.

ALTRUSA:

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ed in more than a dozen nations. In 1946, Altrusa sent its first representative to the United Nations.

In the beginning, club membership was limited to no more than 10 percent of its members in the same occupations, said Pam Cooper. The current District Twelve secretary, Cooper said the Hermiston club would sometimes stretch those limits.

“We were pretty generous with the classifications,” she said. “We would get creative how we classified people.”

In recent years, Cooper has been delighted to have her daughter, Teresa Walchli, alongside her as a member of the Hermiston club. And her granddaughter, Dru Walchli, just recently joined the Eugene group. Another daughter, Cheri Hanson, is working with the Hermiston to sponsor a club in the Tri-Cities, Cooper said.

Helping with Altrusa often spills over into their families, Cooper said. Dru, who is a freshman at University of Oregon, and her cousin, Caitlin Hanson, a sophomore at Richland High School, grew up running auction items during the annual Altrusa Auction in Hermiston.

Connie Ferranti, publicity chairwoman, agreed — saying that often the husbands of members are

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For more information, contact hermistonaltrusa@gmail.com, visit www.district-twelve.altrusa.org or search Facebook.

called upon to assist.

“We call our husbands the “Al-trousers” because sometimes we need help moving something,” she said with a laugh.

Hermiston club president LuAnn Davison attributes the organization’s longevity to the support of members, who give of their time, talents and financial resources. In addition, they receive tremendous support from the community.

Individuals and businesses support Altrusa’s fundraisers. The Altrusans, in turn, pour that money back into the community through a variety of projects.

Altrusa’s main focuses include literacy, education and environmental concerns. Also, each club takes on projects and support programs, both in their individual communities and beyond. From ensuring school children have food during the weekend and providing scholarships for higher education to giving away books and providing grants for community projects, Altrusa is committed to giving back.

“How we explain it is, you’re not a member of Altrusa, you become an Altrusan,” Davison said.

IN BRIEF

Old time musicians fiddle around

For some toe-tappin’ fun, you won’t want to miss a performance of the Blue Mountain Old Time Fiddlers.

The group will play Saturday, April 29, at 6 p.m. at Stokes Landing Senior Center, 195 N.W. Opal Place, Irrigon. The cost is \$5 and free for ages 12-and-under. People are invited to come early, as food will be available for purchase at 5 p.m.

For more information, contact irrigonchamber@irrigonchamber.com or 541-922-6259.

For more information, call Dawn at 541-567-9696.

Hermiston businesses offer tire clean-up

Harley Swain Subaru and Commercial Tire are assisting people in getting rid of old tires.

The Community Amnesty Clean-up Day is Saturday from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. at Harley Swain Subaru, 1915 N. First St., Hermiston. Each person can dispose of up to four tires each, free of charge. Farm implement and semi-tractor tires will not be accepted.

Tai Chi class assists with balance

Older adults are invited to have fun while reducing the risk and fear of falling with Tai Chi: Moving for Better Balance.

A new 24-class series starts Monday, May 1 at 9 a.m. It will meet Monday and Wednesdays in the Good Shepherd Wellness Center, 610 N.W. 11th St., Hermiston. There is no charge to participate.

Offered by the CAPECO Area on Aging, the physical activity class improves balance, increases flexibility and improves core muscle strength. The gentle movements can be performed while standing or seated. No experience is required. Participants should wear comfortable clothing and shoes with flexible soles.

To register, call the Good Shepherd Education Department at 541-667-3509. For more information, contact Helena Wolfe at 541-561-5443 or hwolfe@capeco-works.org.

CHAMBER:

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during the City Council meeting last week, however, that they weren’t impressed with the city’s offering.

“I don’t believe you’ll find a progressive community in Oregon or in the Northwest that you will find their chamber of commerce in a windowless basement,” retired fire chief Pat Hart said.

City staff and city councilors have said that the change in operator for the conference center is not due to any concerns with the job that the chamber has done running the center. Instead, they say, it just makes more financial sense for the city’s growing parks and recreation department to move into the center and take over operations.

Assistant city councilor Mark Morgan said that revenue at the conference center is down 35 percent during the current fiscal year, which began shortly after the event center at the Eastern Oregon Trade and Event Center opened for business.

According to the presentation Morgan gave city councilors before their 6-0 vote, in 2015-2016 the center had gross revenues of \$216,900, split between event revenues and



STAFF PHOTO BY E.J. HARRIS

The Hermiston City Council listens to the testimony of former fire chief Pat Hart during a special session council meeting on the fate of the Hermiston Conference Center on April 18 in Hermiston.

\$91,100 of transient room tax revenue contributed by the city. The gross expenses for running the center were \$198,700. The \$18,200 profit was split three ways between the chamber, capital improvements and the city.

Morgan said if the city is in charge of scheduling the conference center it can work the “synergy” between EOTEC and the center to the best advantage. The plan would also allow the parks and recreation department to use the conference center more often for recreational classes, children’s theater performances and other “community center” uses.

Chamber support-

ers present at the standing-room-only meeting last Tuesday voiced concerns that the move was merely a precursor to the city closing the conference center and selling the building to a private party or re-purposing it as a youth center. They also said there were many event organizers who preferred keeping events at the smaller conference center but were afraid the city would force them to move up to EOTEC to make room for parks and recreation events.

“EOTEC was never envisioned to replace the conference center and was not promoted that way,” chamber board member Bob Green said.

The conference center

came about in 1994, when the city purchased a former, empty Safeway building and the community raised an additional \$600,000 in donations to renovate the space.

In 2015 the city council, expressing concerns that the city would not be able to afford to continue putting Transient Room Tax dollars toward operation of the conference center while also supporting EOTEC, convened the Community Livability Asset Oversight Committee (later shortened to “Livable Hermiston”) to examine what livability assets the city should focus on and where the conference center should fit into that vision.

The 26-member committee, which included chamber director Debbie Pedro and the chamber board president at the time, recommended that the city’s focus for the next three to five years should be ensuring the completion and success of EOTEC, and recommended the city hold off on a decision about the conference center until 2017 so that it could get an idea of how EOTEC would affect the center.

Contact Jade McDowell at jmcdowell@eastoregonian.com or 541-564-4536.

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