

## VOLUNTEERS

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the stage. They sprayed bark dust, laid sod and planted trees. They worked from 8 a.m. until noon to dodge the summer heat under a cloudless sky. And when they were done they had a lunch of smoked meat sandwiches and Hermiston watermelons.

But this swarm of workers was not sweating for that bit of reward. They did this for their faith and community. The Hermiston Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints took on the project.

“We do a day of service once a year or more. We believe service is part of our religion,” said church official Kelly Sanders. “With this year, with the opening of the center, we thought that would be a good thing to help.”

Not all of the volunteers were church members. Sanders said the fair board helped recruit volunteers too, and a contingent came over from Boardman’s U.S. Naval Bombing Range.

Bruce Mecham of Hermiston and his family are church members. He, his wife and their three daughters planted about two dozen trees in the area of the new rodeo arena and mercantile. He looked around for a moment before shoving a long protective stake in the earth around one of the new trees.

“It’s pretty awesome to see the community come together and put something together,” said Mecham, who oversees food and beverage operations at Wildhorse Resort and Casino.

The volunteers were not the only ones putting in their time Saturday, with the fair just 10 days away. Hendon Construction of Umatilla has a 12-man crew finishing the stands for the Farm-City Pro Rodeo. Carl Hendon, secretary of the company, said the crews are working sev-

en days a week to finish in time for the fair.

Hendon Construction’s specialty is building food processing plants, which have stringent deadlines. Hendon said they are building something different this time, but the hard deadline remains the same.

Friday was the visual inspection, he said, and the final inspection was Tuesday. Come Wednesday, Hendon said he expects the arena to have its occupancy permit. When the fair opens Aug. 8, Hendon said workers might have a few odds and ends to finish, but the stands will be ready for fans.

Hendon Construction serves as the general contractor on the project, and Hendon said the company took on that role in large part due to the subcontractors. They are local and include Narum Concrete Construction of Walla Walla, and Bothum Construction of Hermiston. Hendon said they are the kinds of companies he trusted on handshake deals necessary to get the work done on time.

Finishing everything, from the interior of the mercantile to the acres of sod, will not get easier in the finals days before the fair. The National Weather Service predicted triple-digit temperatures this week, soaring to 107 by Friday. Hendon said work crews have been starting their days at 5 a.m. but they might come even earlier, take afternoons off and work at night to beat the heat.

Fair board member Dan Dorran worked hand-in-glove with everyone else, the sweat showing through his shirt. This has become par for this course, he said, as he and the other six members of the fair board put in hour after hour to get EOTEC ready for its first big show.

They had been away from home so much in the last month, he quipped



STAFF PHOTO BY KATHY ANEY

**Volunteer Brenna Dickman helps gather brush Saturday from the edge of the Eastern Oregon Trade and Event Center parking lot. The facility's first Umatilla County Fair, will kick off next week.**



STAFF PHOTO BY KATHY ANEY

**Volunteers Laura and Bruce Mecham secure a newly planted tree with stakes Saturday at the Eastern Oregon Trade and Event Center arena.**

that their wives checked to make sure they were working and not hanging out in some bar.

Dorran stood in front of the event center and pointed out the animal holding area, which he said is better than

any he has seen in years of livestock shows. But beyond becoming the new home of the fair and rodeo, Dorran said the event center is the culmination of a vision that began 35 years ago and a community-wide effort.

## RIVERA

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Rivera, who was present at the meeting, did not officially accept the offer and said he was not comfortable commenting on it before the discussions with Smith, who also oversees Rivera in his current position at Hermiston Energy Services.

Heather Cannell has been running the event center’s day-to-day operations under the title of business manager, but Cannell resigned effective Aug. 14 to take a new position at the SAGE Center in Boardman. The EOTEC board started advertising for a general manager position in early June and Cannell did not apply. After an executive session Friday to discuss employment of a general manager, the board took no action.

Rivera is the superintendent of Hermiston Energy Services, the city’s municipal electrical utility, and is serving this year as the president of the Oregon Municipal Electric Utilities Board. He previ-

ously worked for Umatilla Electric Cooperative for 10 years as its community relations representative.

Rivera was involved in early planning for EOTEC and served as an “administrative volunteer” and liaison between the board and consultant VenuWorks in 2013 as the company put together a business plan for the center. In late 2015 he came back to serve on the fundraising committee that raised more than \$2 million for EOTEC.

The motion on Monday to extend the interim manager job offer to Rivera took place after an executive session that lasted more than an hour. The meeting took place at EOTEC’s event center amid preparations for the Umatilla County Fair and Farm-City Pro Rodeo that are in full swing, exemplified by fair board representative Don Miller’s mud-stained jeans as he took a break from working outside to participate in the meeting.

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Hermiston

Herald

VOLUME 111 • NUMBER 31

NIE

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Printed on recycled newsprint

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The Hermiston Herald (USPS 242220, ISSN 8750-4782) is published weekly at Hermiston Herald, 333 E. Main St., Hermiston, OR 97838, (541) 567-6457.

**ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION RATES**  
Delivered by carrier and mail Wednesdays  
Inside Umatilla/Morrow counties.....\$42.65  
Outside Umatilla/Morrow counties.....\$53.90

Periodical postage paid at Hermiston, OR.  
Postmaster, send address changes to Hermiston Herald, 333 E. Main St., Hermiston, OR 97838.

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### BY THE WAY

## BTW

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hand when Norris arrived to present the longtime physician with the quilt.

“He was pleasantly surprised and very humble,” Norris said.

A family practice specialist, Carlson owns and operates the Urgent Health Care Center on East Newport Avenue in Hermiston.

Founded in 2003, the mission of Quilts of Valor is to “honor and comfort” service members and veterans. The local group regularly hosts sew-ins at Thimbles Fabric-N-More in Pendleton. For more information, contact Norris at [j.marie.norris@QOVF.org](mailto:j.marie.norris@QOVF.org), 541-429-1327 or visit [www.facebook.com/j.marie.radqltart](http://www.facebook.com/j.marie.radqltart).

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We are officially out of eclipse glasses at the Hermiston office of the Hermiston Herald and East Oregonian. The eye protection devices for this month’s solar eclipse have proven popular and we are completely sold out. The latest information we have is the Bi-Mart and Life-time Vision Source may still have the Mylar eye protection shade still available. We had hoped to have pairs available at our booth next week at the Umatilla County Fair, but we sold out before the fair started, we are sad to say. Please don’t look at the Aug. 21 eclipse without adequate eye protection. Me need our readers to protect their vision!

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You can submit items for our weekly By The Way column by emailing your tips to [editor@hermistonherald.com](mailto:editor@hermistonherald.com) or share them on social media using the hashtag #HHBTW. Follow the Hermiston Herald on Twitter at @Hermiston-Herald.

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Rodeo ticket includes Free Admission to the Umatilla County Fair

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\$5 Child Gen. Adm. Tickets  
(12 & under)

THURSDAY MILITARY NIGHT  
\$10 Reserved Tickets  
(past & present military & family)

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