

First fair at EOTEC a success

HERMISTON HERALD

Another Umatilla County Fair is in the books. Attendance numbers won't come out for another two weeks, but sponsorship and activities director Cyndie Driscoll said attendance was "definitely up each night."

"That's been a lot of the comments, that there's so much more room that even though patrons know there are more people there they don't feel crowded," she said.

The extra attendance seemed to skew heavily toward the evening, when temperatures were cooler. Friday reached 104 degrees, according to data from the National Weather Service, compared to 86 degrees the year before and a historical average of 91 degrees.

On the rodeo side, Farm-City Pro Rodeo board member Dennis Barnett said they didn't have exact attendance numbers, but based on factors such as beverage sales he would estimate attendance Wednesday and Thursday were up about 15 to 20 percent from previous rodeos. Saturday's rodeo didn't sell out as was usual in the original venue, but thanks to an extra 2,500 seats there were more fans than usual able to attend.

Barnett said the new arena performed extremely well, especially considering how little time there was to complete construction, and there seemed to be only small tweaks needed for next year.

"We're excited," he said.

The biggest complaint on social media was issues with traffic and parking. On Thursday, after traffic was backed up on Highway 395 as far north as the water tower Wednesday night, fair and Eastern Oregon Trade and Event Center board member Don Miller said the fair board was making changes to the flow of parking and traffic for the rest of the week to relieve congestion, allowing more people to exit using the main parking lot entrance and onto Ott Road late at night.

The system for entering the fairgrounds was also revamped, and on Friday and Saturday a shuttle bus took people from town to EOTEC for free from 2-10 p.m.

See FAIR, A13



STAFF PHOTOS BY E.J. HARRIS

Children ride the Scream Machine at the carnival Wednesday at the Umatilla County Fair in Hermiston.



Hermiston junior Isel Tejeda Urenda gets help with a halter for one of her heifers from her friend, Corey Mason, 18 of Hermiston, as Hermiston junior Joseph Knight looks on Wednesday at the Umatilla County Fair in Hermiston.

Graduation: Time for a change?

School board considers moving graduation to Toyota Center, Kennison, or EOTEC

By JAYATI RAMAKRISHNAN  
STAFF WRITER

The Hermiston School Board will soon consider whether to move the high school graduation ceremony after several years of growing graduating classes have limited the number of family members who can attend the ceremony.

At its meeting on Monday night, the board heard a presentation from Hermiston High School Principal Tom Spoo and Athletic Director Larry Usher about different options available to the district.

Spoo and Usher presented four options: staying in the current venue, moving outside to Kennison Field, to the new Eastern Oregon Trade and Event Center rodeo grounds, or to the Toyota Center in Kennewick.

At this year's graduation, students were given five tickets each for guests, one fewer than last year's allotment. Usher estimated that with the projected senior class size, 2018 would see a reduction to four tickets per student. The high school gymnasium seats about 1,800 people, not including graduates. This year, the district also live-

streamed graduation in the auditorium, which seated about 500 more, and in the high school commons. Additionally, Spoo said, the current venue has limited handicap access and visibility.

"We are over capacity," he said.

The two administrators presented the advantages and challenges that would result from each venue change, but many of the same issues lingered.

Kennison Field, they said, provides about 200 more seats, but is outdoors, and weather issues could interfere with the ceremony.

The EOTEC rodeo arena could seat about 3,400 for a graduation setup, (although the venue has

See GRADUATION, A6

INSIDE

NORMANDY  
TO UMATILLA

FORMER MAYOR'S FAMILY  
CELEBRATES LEGACY OF  
GEORGE HASH  
PAGE A3

PERRY VISITS

ENERGY SECRETARY RICK  
PERRY TOURS NORTHWEST  
ENERGY FACILITIES  
PAGE A3

30TH RODEO

FARM-CITY CROWNS  
2017 CHAMPIONS  
PAGE A8

BY THE WAY

Eclipse leads  
to change in  
office hours

The office of *Hermiston Herald* and *East Oregonian* at 333 E. Main St., Hermiston will be closed between 9:30 a.m. and 11 a.m. on Monday, Aug. 21, for the solar eclipse, to allow staff and the community to have the opportunity to observe the rare astronomical event.

We won't experience the total solar eclipse here, but will see the sun eclipsed by about 97 percent, beginning at 9:09 a.m. until about 11:44 a.m., with the maximum eclipse at 10:23 a.m.

The last total eclipse of the sun visible in Oregon occurred in 1979. The next today solar eclipse that will be visible in the United States won't occur until April 8, 2024, but it won't be visible in Oregon. One on Aug. 12, 2045 will be visible in Northern California, parts of Nevada and Utah.

The highlight of the July 17 **American Red Cross** blood drive held at **Good Shepherd Medical Center** in Hermiston was welcoming first-time donor **Jason Haigh** of Hermiston.

Overall, the drive collected 39 units from 48 donors, said **Patti Perkins**, who helps coordinate the blood drives. The canteen, she said, was furnished by **Good Shepherd Medical Center Hospital Auxiliary**.

The next blood drive at Good Shepherd is Monday, Aug. 21 from noon to 6 p.m. While walk-ins are welcome, appointments can be made by calling 800-448-3543.

Blood products are always in high demand, Perkins said, but the summer months result in increased needs. A donation of blood can save the lives of up to three people.

See BTW, A6

