

Hermiston Herald

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INSIDE

SENIOR CENTER CONSTRUCTION *taking* SHAPE



Hermiston's senior citizens are meeting at Our Lady of Angels Catholic Church until the Harkenrider Center's completion

By **JADE McDOWELL**
STAFF WRITER

Hermiston's seniors are making do with a church basement after losing their old senior center, but construction is in full swing for their new home downtown.

Parks and recreation director Larry Fetter said construction is on track to wrap up sometime in the spring, although it's too soon to say what month. Already, the concrete for the Harkenrider Center's daylight basement is in place and crews from G2 Construction are putting up beams for walls on the main level.

"Trusses for the roof are scheduled to arrive Sept. 18, and then things will really be shaping up at that point," Fetter said.

The city's senior citizens found themselves in need of a new gathering place after the former fairgrounds in the middle of town, which included the senior center building, were sold to Hermiston School District as part of the deal that resulted in the new Eastern Oregon Trade and Event Center. The school district has started demolishing the fairgrounds to make room for more parking, ballfields and other improvements.

"The old building should be coming down any time," Fetter said.

After the seniors struggled to raise the money needed to build a new center, the city stepped in and procured a \$2 million federal community development block grant and agreed to use money from its own general fund to add a parking lot

and daylight basement. During the interim leading up to the Harkenrider Center's completion, Our Lady of Angels Catholic Church is allowing the seniors to serve meals on Tuesdays and Thursdays at the church and hold other activities there.

Fetter said the senior center board is pitching in to help make the new senior center a reality, most recently by working to recruit a grant writer to help come up with the money for furnishings and appliances to stock the commercial kitchen, offices, breakout rooms and a spacious main room that will include a gas fireplace and billiards.

"They've been pretty involved," Fetter said. "They've got their hands full with

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Air quality alert in effect

HERMISTON HERALD

Residents can expect smoky skies and low air quality all week across northeast Oregon as wildfires continue to rage in the Pacific Northwest.

The Oregon Department of Environmental Quality has issued an air quality alert until noon Friday for Umatilla and Morrow counties as well as Union, Wallowa, Gilliam, Wheeler, Grant, Sherman, Wasco, Crook, Deschutes and Jefferson counties.

Fine particles in smoke can cause burning eyes, runny nose and aggravate other serious health problems, such as chronic heart and lung disease. Smoke

can also limit visibility. People should limit outdoor activity while the alert is in effect, especially children, the elderly and those with respiratory problems.

The air quality in Eastern Oregon is still rated "very unhealthy," as smoke from fires across the region permeates the area. The Oregon Department of Environmental Quality said that people with heart or lung disease, older adults, and children should avoid physical activity outside, and all others should avoid unnecessary exposure to the air.

The Oregon Department of Environmental Quality has issued

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STAFF PHOTO BY GARY L. WEST

Smoke from fires in the region are having a negative effect on air quality and visibility. From the south end of town, while it is still possible to see the water tower from Highway 395, smoke obscures the view of the rest of the city from the top of the hill.

CELEBRATING 109
GENEVA EDDINGS CELEBRATES A BIG BIRTHDAY SURROUNDED BY FAMILY.
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STUDENT ART
ARTWORK OF LOCAL STUDENTS CELEBRATING AG COMMODITIES FEATURED ON CALENDAR.
PAGE A4

EXPANDING DOWNTOWN
NEW BUSINESS DISTRICT STARTING WEST OF HIGHWAY 395.
PAGE A6

NEW UNIFORMS
KILKENNY FAMILY, NIKE OUTFIT HEPPNER MUSTANGS IN NEW GEAR.
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BY THE WAY

Event kicks off new playground installation

If you were hoping to bump into Trail Blazers stars like Damian Lillard or C.J. McCollum, or event Coach Terry Stotts this week in Hermiston, you are out of luck.

Hermiston won a contest earlier this year sponsored by **Moda Health** and the **Portland Trail Blazers** to go toward new playground equipment at Sunset Park, and representatives of the Blazers were expected to attend the grand opening celebration on Thursday, with the hope that it would include some players. The Blazers are sending a delegation, but as of press time Tuesday no players or coaches are expected to attend Thursday's event at 4 p.m. Thursday or the basketball clinics from 3 to 5 p.m. Attending the ceremony on behalf of the Portland Trail Blazers will be vice president of social responsibility **Christa Stout** and Moda Health senior vice president **Robin Richardson**.

Tad Farley, a student at **Rocky Heights Elementary School**, participated in the Oregon Statewide Spelling Championship, held this past weekend at the Oregon State Fair.

A fifth-grader, Farley was among a group of 63 star spellers from 27 counties across the state. KOIN 6's **Andrew Dymburt** served as master of ceremonies for the contest.

In its ninth year of coordinating the contest, **Oregon Spellers** is an all-volunteer group funded by donations and sponsored by the **Oregon Association for Talented and Gifted**. For more information, contact oregonspellers@kaynor.net or visit www.oregonspellers.org.

Michele Kietzke was sworn in as president of **The Arc Umatilla County** during

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