

Hermiston sophomore stable after tree mishap

By **JAYATI RAMAKRISHNAN**
STAFF WRITER

Community members are raising money for a Hermiston girl who was hit and injured by a falling tree.

Jordan Larson, a 15-year-old Hermiston High School sophomore, was taken to Kadlec Regional Medical Center, Richland on Friday afternoon after a tree fell on her. She was then transported to Seattle for further medical treatment, where she remained as of Monday.

Ivy Coons, Larson's mother, said her daughter is doing better after two surgeries immediately after the accident.

"They've been able to remove the tubes from her throat," Coons said. "She had to have two blood clots removed from her head. They have removed the drain tube from her chest."

Coons said her daughter's eyes were swollen shut, and she initially had to be restrained to prevent her from touching her face and head. Larson was in and out of consciousness.

She said doctors told her that her daughter may be moved out of intensive care by the end of the week.

Coons said her daughter was taken to Good Shepherd Medical Center, Hermiston, and immediately flown to Richland for treatment on Friday. From there she was taken to Harborview Medical Center in Seattle.

"The first surgery she had, I was on the road," Coons said, adding that it took place within an hour of her daughter arriving at the hospital and was to remove a blood clot in her brain. That surgery, she said, revealed a second blood clot

which required a second surgery.

Coons said her daughter is now responsive and recognized her.

"She just asked me for root beer," Coons said by phone on Monday afternoon, from her daughter's hospital room in Seattle.

A friend of the family has set up a GoFundMe page for the family, to help them with medical and utility bills.

"Ivy's a single mom," said Irene Zaragoza, who set up the page with a goal of \$5,000. "She's not working now, she had to take time off."

Zaragoza said things are looking better than they were the first few days.

"She was really fighting for her life," Zaragoza said. "Ivy said it's a long tunnel, but there's a light at the end of it."

Coons agreed. "Friday was the worst night of my life," she said.

Coons said she does not know much about how the accident happened.

"I don't know whose house it was, I don't even know who gave the report," she said.

She said she found out when she was at work, and one of her daughter's friends sent her a message telling her she needed to come to the emergency room.

According to Umatilla County Undersheriff Jim Littlefield, property owners in the 2000 block of Northwest 11th Street were cleaning up their land around 1 p.m. Friday, and there was an old shed supporting a tree with rotten roots.

Littlefield said when the people on the property tried to remove the shed, the tree gave way and fell on Larson.



CONTRIBUTED BY LUKES PHOTOS

Members of New Hope Community Church and others from the community work on a clean-up effort as part of the ongoing "I Love My City" campaign Saturday near the Hermiston Butte.

I Love My City spruces up Butte

About 75 people work on trail, pick up trash at Hermiston park

By **TAMMY MALGESINI**
STAFF WRITER

Efforts to beautify Hermiston and let people know they care about their community continued this weekend as another "I Love My City" event was held around the Hermiston Butte.

The campaign started in the fall of 2016 when members of the Hermiston Assembly of God wanted to do something to help the healing process after the community was rocked by tragedies. New Hope Community Church, Templo de Fe Esperanza y Amor and other community members have since joined the efforts.

Tim Beal, pastor of family ministries at New Hope, said there had been discussion among the congregation about doing something to reach out to the community.

"When we saw what Hermiston Assembly was doing we thought that was a similar vision to what we had in mind," he said. "It seemed like an easy thing



CONTRIBUTED BY LUKES PHOTOS

Community members participate in an "I Love My City" clean-up effort Saturday in the vicinity of the Hermiston Butte.

to partner in and do together."

The different churches, Beal said, head up community service projects and activities several times a year and also get together to work on a larger outreach effort.

Organized by New Hope, Saturday's event included about 75 people of all ages — including babies in backpacks, Beal said. Although smaller children sometimes slow down the progress on projects, Beal said it's important to include all ages as a way to encourage giving back to one's community.

"When parents and

adults model the selfless and giving attitude ... it leads to a stronger community and a stronger sense of community support," he said.

Using wheelbarrows, shovels, rakes and even an all-terrain vehicle, participants helped in picking up trash, providing trail maintenance near the Butte and painting equipment at Funland Park. Beal said they chose the particular projects after talking to Larry Fetter, director of Hermiston Parks & Recreation. Fetter provided a list of possible projects that volunteer groups could do to help the city.

Heidi Gray, along with her children, Nattalie, 14, and Luke, 12, helped during a past event as well as Saturday's clean-up day. She said it was fun to participate in an activity with family, friends and neighbors.

"We have talked about how if you want to see a change in the community around you it often takes getting out and doing something about it," Gray said. "So in a small way we did that today."

Also, Gray said it offers a way for kids to take ownership in their town. Youths, she said, might be more aware of the impact of littering after spending a day picking up after others.

"And this way, they learn leadership begins by getting the dirty stuff done," Gray added.

Many participants donned red "I Love My City" T-shirts. Beal said the shirts stand out and some people have asked what they are involved with.

"We just believe God calls us to take care for our city," he said. "For me, it makes me more invested in the city with pride and ownership."

A larger "I Love My City" project is planned in April, Beal said. Information will be available as the date nears.



STAFF PHOTO BY JADE MCDOWELL

Umatilla County Fire District 1 personnel load a patient into an ambulance in the 2000 block of NW 11th St., Hermiston, Friday afternoon.

Residents don't need to winterize water meters

HERMISTON — Hermiston water customers no longer need to pack their water meters with insulation to protect them from winter weather.

The city is nearing the end of a project to replace every customer's water meter with a new model that can be read remotely and provide more detailed reports of water usage throughout the month. National Meter

and Automation, the company installing the meters, has placed insulation around the meters as they are installed.

The insulation, consisting of a pink fiberglass wrapped in blue plastic, can be left in the meter boxes year-round because the meters can now be read without physically inspecting the meter. The city requests that people leave the insulation in place all year.

Attempted dog theft leads to stabbing

One man arrested, another treated at hospital and released



Simpkins

A Hermiston man was arrested Sunday night after he allegedly stabbed another man during a dispute over a dog.

Jason Simpkins, 30, is accused

of cutting Jonathan Sager, 30, with a knife, causing non-life-threatening lacerations to his back. The incident happened on the 900 block of Southwest 11th Street. According to the Hermiston Police Department, Simpkins was trying to take a dog belonging to Sager, a transient.

Simpkins and Sager know each other, officers said.

Police took Simpkins into custody several blocks from where the incident happened. He was charged with assault, robbery and criminal mischief and held in Umatilla County Jail on \$105,000 bail.

Sager was taken to Good Shepherd Medical Center, Hermiston, for his injuries and released the same night. He still has the dog with him.

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