

Local woman cleans up one bag at a time

Ainsworth picks up litter every day on her morning walks

By **JADE MCDOWELL**
EAST OREGONIAN

Every morning after she drops her son off at kindergarten, Miranda Ainsworth laces up her waterproof walking shoes and gets to work, cleaning up after Hermiston's litterbugs.

On Wednesday she was wading through waist-deep grass alongside Highway 207 on the south edge of town, using a plastic trash-grabbing claw to pull empty beer cans and plastic bags from the weeds. So far this month, Ainsworth said she has picked up 23 kitchen-sized garbage bags full of trash. Last month she filled 49 bags.

Ainsworth isn't paid for her work, and her community service isn't court-or-

dered. She's just an average citizen who decided that she could be putting her morning walks to better use.

"I try and do my part to help around the community," she said.

Ainsworth said she started a few years ago in Kent, Washington, before continuing the practice when she moved to Hermiston in February. She said she has always noticed litter in parks and along roadways, and it bothers her.

"It speaks a lot about the community," she said.

First she started bringing along the plastic grocery bags so she could grab a few things along the way, but after she ran out of grocery bags she switched to larger garbage bags and started getting more serious about planning her walks around areas of town that have litter problems. Beverage containers, cigarette packs and paper are the most common items, but sometimes she makes more



Miranda Ainsworth picks up trash along Highway 207.

STAFF PHOTO BY JADE MCDOWELL

interesting finds, particularly along the railroad tracks.

"I found part of a TV. I found a vacuum cleaner," she said. "It was tossed along the roadside and had a lot of dirt on it."

Once she found a collection of used needles and let the police department know so that they could be disposed of safely.

She said there are areas with high-speed traffic that

she feels more comfortable cleaning up now that her son is in school and not accompanying her on walks. She tries to be careful by walking toward traffic along roadways with larger

shoulders, which reduces the chance of being hit by a car. Sometimes she gets dirty looks, she said, from people who see her in grubby clothes carrying garbage bags and don't seem to realize what she is doing. But other times people take the time to ask her what she's doing, and respond with enthusiastic thanks when she explains.

Ainsworth said sometimes she gets busy and only goes out two or three times in a week, but for the most part she is out there five mornings a week picking up trash for at least an hour. She is looking for a part-time job, which may cut into her walking time, but for now she hopes her habit inspires others to take better care of their community.

"When people see something clean, they generally try and keep it clean, but if it's already dirty they think, 'Oh, it doesn't matter,'" she said.

BMCC enrollment up 11 percent

BMCC recruiters go full throttle

By **KATHY ANEY**
STAFF WRITER

Last year, J.J. Hill drove about 10,000 miles from high school to high school in his ride — a silver Subaru Crosstrek emblazoned with the Blue Mountain Community College logo.

Last week, the BMCC recruiter chatted with 25 Echo High School seniors about college.

"We're going to do a little word association," Hill told the students. "When I say 'community college,' what's the first word that comes into your head?"

Words flowed back to Hill: small, cheap, more affordable, future, cost.

Hill flung out another phrase — four-year college — and got another stream of words: big, scary, expensive, huge, money, dorms and debt.

He segued into a discussion of why small can be good. BMCC has an average class size of 15, he said, quite different from four-year institutions where



STAFF PHOTO BY E.J. HARRIS

BMCC recruiter J.J. Hill speaks to a classroom of senior high school students on Wednesday in Echo.

freshmen often find large lecture halls and little or no one-on-one time with instructors. Students asked about programs, financial aid and how to find scholarships.

What Hill is doing seems to be working.

BMCC reported enrollment of 11 percent more students compared with last fall term — while the nation's community colleges are collectively experiencing a downward trend. Lane Community College in Eugene, for example, experienced a 6.5 percent decline compared with last fall

according to an article in "The Torch," the college's media organization. Eastern Oregon University's enrollment is also down this year. The BMCC number, which is 2,766 students, up from 2,491 in 2016, is just a snapshot, a moment in time, but administrators are ecstatic. BMCC Vice-President of Student Affairs Diane Drebin said the Pendleton college has managed to buck a trend.

"It is unusual to see a rise in enrollment when it isn't associated with a decline in the economy," Drebin said. BMCC President Ca-

mille Preus credits a switch in recruitment strategy that began three years ago. It didn't — "Shazam" — just happen, she said.

The college got intentional about face time with potential students and outreach is at full-throttle. Hill treks to each high school in BMCC's 18,000-square-mile district at least twice a year.

The other full-time recruitment person, program assistant (and BMCC graduate) Abby Pierson, focuses on younger students. Pierson engaged several dozen Hermiston middle school students during a recent campus tour. She explained federal aid, the cost of attending college and the relationship between education and future earnings. A list of all 70 BMCC degrees and certificate programs flashed onto a screen. Pierson sped up, slowed down, changed gears and pulled them along. Afterwards, the students toured campus. By the time they climbed back on the bus, they could imagine themselves at BMCC.

Contact Kathy Aney at kaney@eastoregonian.com or 941-966-0810.

Gas plant devaluation hits school budgets

By **PHIL WRIGHT**
STAFF WRITER

The Oregon Department of Revenue knocked \$54 million off the assessed value of the Hermiston Generating Company.

The devaluation means a drop in local property tax revenue of \$934,672 for 2017-18, with education taking the brunt of the loss.

Linda Blacklock with the revenue department's valuation section said strict confidentiality laws prohibit revealing what led to the downgrade at the natural gas plant. The Hermiston Generating Co., 78145 Westland Road, Hermiston, had a real market value of \$180 million and an assessed value of nearly \$155 million for 2016-17. Blacklock said the plant's real and assessed values for 2017-18 are each \$100 million.

Umatilla County mailed tax bills this week. The power company's new values show up on its latest tax statement. Paul Chalmers, director of county assessment and taxation, said the devaluation amounts to about 1 percent of the county's total assessed value.

And the state would not tell him why Hermiston



STAFF PHOTO BY E.J. HARRIS

The Hermiston Generating Co. power plant on Westland Road had its assessed value lowered by \$54 million by the Oregon Department of Revenue.

Generating's value fell, he added.

County tax records show Hermiston Generating paid

more than \$2.43 million in property taxes for 2016-17, with \$900,000 of that for education: \$89,877

for the InterMountain Education Service District; \$96,520 for Blue Mountain Community College; and \$713,602 for the Hermiston School District.

The decrease in the company's assessed value dropped the portion for the school district to almost \$400,000, BMCC's to about \$54,000 and the service district's to roughly \$50,000.

Tricia Mooney, Hermiston schools interim superintendent, said the district planned for growth at about 3 percent, but that's now down to around 1.9 percent. She said the district will have to address the situation going forward, and it's too early to say what might result from the revenue decline.

Contact Phil Wright at pwright@eastoregonian.com or 541-966-0833.

WORSHIP COMMUNITY

Grace Baptist Church

555 SW 11th, Hermiston
567-9497

Nursery provided for all services
Sunday School - 9:30 AM
Worship - 10:45 AM
6:00 PM
Wed Prayer & Worship - 7:00 PM

"Proclaiming God's word, growing in God's grace"

Our Lady of Angels
Catholic Church
565 W. HERMISTON AVE.
DAILY MASS: Monday-Friday
.....English 7:00 am
Thursday.....Spanish 6:00 pm
SATURDAY.....English 5:00 pm
.....Spanish 7:00 pm
SUNDAY.....English 9:00 am
.....Bilingual 11:00 am
.....Spanish 1:00 pm
Office.....567-5812

First United Methodist Church
Hermiston
191 E. Gladys Ave., Hermiston OR
Sunday Worship 11am • 541-567-3002
Nursery available. Check us out on Face Book
Worship Livestream at herfumc.com
Open Hearts, Open Minds, Open Doors
Rev. Dr. Jim Pierce, pastor

Seventh-day Adventist Church
Saturdays
Sabbath School.....9:30 a.m.
Worship Service.....11:00 a.m.
English & Spanish Services
567-8241
855 W. Highland • Hermiston

LANDMARK BAPTIST CHURCH
125 E. Beech Ave. • 567-3232
Pastor David Dever
Sun. Bible Classes.....10:00am
Sun. Worship Service.....11:00am
Sun. Evening Worship.....6:00pm
Wed. Prayer & Bible Study.....6:00pm
www.hermistonlmbc.com

St. Johns Episcopal Church
Join Us
On Our Journey
With Jesus.
Scripture, Tradition and Reason
Family service 9am Sunday
N.E. Gladys Ave & 7th, Hermiston
PH: 567-6672
We are an all inclusive Church who welcomes all.

The Full Gospel Home Church
235 SW 3rd
Phone 567-7678
Rev. Ed Baker - Rev. Nina Baker
Sunday:
Sunday School.....10:00 am
Worship.....11:00 am
Evening Service.....7:00 pm
Wednesday Service..7:00 pm
"Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you."
1 Pet. 5:7

Oasis Vineyard
A COMMUNITY OF HOPE
1255 Hwy. 395 S. • 567-5834
oasisvineyard.us
Worship 10:00 AM
"come as you are"

First Christian Church
"Proclaiming the Message of Hope, Living the Gospel of Love"
Sunday School 9:15am
Worship Gathering 10:30 am
Children's Church 10:30 am
567-3013
775 W. Highland Ave., Hermiston

NEW BEGINNINGS
CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP
Worship Service 10:30 AM
Sunday School 9:00 AM
Pastor J.C. Barnett
Children's Church & Nursery Available
700 West Orchard Avenue
P.O. Box 933
Hermiston, Oregon
541-567-8441

Echo Community Church
21 N. Bonanza Street, Echo OR
Phone: (541) 376-8108
Sunday School • 9:30am
Worship • 10:45am
Children's Church • 11:15am
Potluck & Communion ~ First Sunday of the Month

HermNaz
the best thing about Sundays
1520 W ORCHARD AVE
Sunday Worship Service
10:30 am Classes for Kids @ 9:15 am
SEEKING JESUS, SHARING LIFE, SERVING PEOPLE
www.hermistonnazarene.org

To share your worship times call
541-278-2678

STOREWIDE SALE 20% OFF

not on consignment & Chocolate

November 1st thru 22nd • 2017

Monday – Saturday: 10 AM - 5:30 PM

SHOP EARLY FOR THE HOLIDAY

SUNSHINE GOURMET SHOPPE
29 Southeast Dorian • Pendleton OR 97801 • 541-276-4974
Purveyors of fine products and foods