



STAFF PHOTO BY E.J. HARRIS

Umatilla County Fair day campers visit Bill Jennings and Bob Daniel at the American Legion booth in the EOTEC event center in August at the Umatilla County Fair.

Estimate: EOTEC to be profitable in three years

By **JADE MCDOWELL**
STAFF WRITER

The Eastern Oregon Trade and Event Center board plans to contract with VenuWorks to run its facility, and the management company believes it can get EOTEC profitable in three years.

The Iowa-based venue-management company operates arenas, conference centers, fairgrounds and other facilities, including Toyota Center and Three Rivers Convention Center in the Tri-Cities.

"I totally have confidence in VenuWorks," board member and hotelier Vijay Patel said. "I've seen how they operate in Kennewick ... I can assure you it's a class A team and they will help us bring in more events than we would otherwise."

The board unanimously passed a motion directing a subcommittee and interim manager Nate Rivera to negotiate a contract with VenuWorks to vote on at a special Nov. 21 meeting.

During a presentation to the board, Corey Pearson, executive director of the Three Rivers campus in Kennewick, displayed a cost/revenue analysis estimating that under VenuWorks' management EOTEC would be at a \$116,350 loss for the first year of the facility, \$93,362 loss for the second year and a \$4,968 profit on year three. Built into those estimates is an assumption that the city and county will continue to pay \$75,000 per year to EOTEC for operations as it is currently doing.

One reason it would take time to become profitable, Pearson said, is that even though VenuWorks would "come out swinging" with its marketing strategy, most conventions and trade shows book their events two or three years out.

"Year one you're marketing to groups that have already made a commitment somewhere else," he said.

Under the VenuWorks model, the EOTEC board would still have full control over setting budget and policies for the facil-

ity, but VenuWorks would provide recommendations based on their expertise and run day-to-day operations. The company has proposed a base fee of \$10,000 per month for services such as marketing and financial management. Those costs would be in addition to payroll for a general manager, event manager/administrative assistant and two operations staff.

Rivera said EOTEC's operating costs have been significantly more than budgeted in recent months because labor is being contracted, causing the current year's budget to look a lot like VenuWorks' year one projection. If EOTEC doesn't change how it is operating the facility, he said, the budget will continue to look that way each year. Rivera said he felt Hermiston and Umatilla County taxpayers would rather EOTEC go with the safest option most likely to help the center start turning a profit within a few years.

When board members questioned whether Umatilla County and the city of Hermiston would be willing to cover EOTEC's projected losses for the first couple of years in addition to the \$75,000 per year each had already committed, Mayor David Drotzmann said that the city had expected to have to help subsidize EOTEC for the first few years and he thought the city council would be willing to support the amounts that VenuWorks had estimated.

"We took a leap of faith together knowing there would be some losses in the first year," he said, calling VenuWorks' projections of getting EOTEC out of the red by year three "exciting."



STAFF PHOTO BY E.J. HARRIS

Hermiston Foods on South Highway 395 in Hermiston will close this month, laying off 199 employees.

Employees prepare for plant closure

CAPECO and Worksource Oregon help train people looking for new careers

By **JADE MCDOWELL**
STAFF WRITER

Nearly 200 Hermiston Foods employees are getting help seeking new jobs as the plant prepares to process its last vegetable this month.

NORPAC Foods Inc. announced at the end of June that it would be shutting down the vegetable-processing plant — Hermiston's ninth largest employer — in order to consolidate the plant's operations with a facility in Quincy, Washington.

According to a Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notification sent to the state, 199 people will be laid off, including 14 salaried employees, and "closure separations are anticipated to begin November 13, 2017 or within fourteen (14) days thereafter." The notice states that there will be "some limited work" decommissioning the plant in the ensuing months.

The notification is required by law for layoffs involving at least 50 people. It gives the state's dislocated worker unit a chance to partner with state and local agencies to help

workers with the transition to unemployment or their next job.

"The goal is to re-employ the workers as quickly as possible," John Asher of the Oregon Dislocated Worker Unit said.

For the Hermiston Foods closure, CAPECO (Community Action Program of East Central Oregon) and Worksource Oregon have been making visits to Hermiston Foods each week to train employees on things like applying for unemployment, enrolling in health insurance plans in the Affordable Care Act marketplace and writing a resume. CAPECO held a job fair for workers recently, and Worksource Oregon hosted individualized meetings with employees to discuss job hunting.

"We know a lot of manufacturing plants in the area that are desperate for workers," Tara Bishop of CAPECO said.

For some laid-off employees, immediately getting a job at another food processing plant in the area, such as ConAgra Foods or Shearer's Foods, may be their preference. But Bishop said many of Hermiston Foods' hourly workers lack English skills or a GED, and CAPECO is willing to help them get both — or other needed education and skills train-

ing — in order to improve their job prospects in the future.

"There are a lot of opportunities for this group, but it's also a great opportunity for them to scale up, increase their education," she said.

NORPAC spokeswoman Amy Woods said in an email that Hermiston Foods' day shift ended early and its night shift started late last Wednesday in order to give employees an opportunity to go to the job fair, which featured booths by 22 local employers and five agencies.

hiring ramping up each harvest season. The facility processes peas, sugar snap peas, edamame, lima beans, carrots and asparagus. Woods said most of the produce came from the Hermiston and Boardman area, except for the asparagus, and was sent to NORPAC's warehouse facilities in Salem afterward. NORPAC will continue to contract for peas, sugar snap peas and carrots from area growers but will send them to other NORPAC facilities in future seasons, she said.

In its 2016 financial report, the city of Hermiston listed Hermiston Foods as the ninth largest employer in town, making up 2.8 percent of the city's total employment. Hermiston Foods was also the city's largest water customer. It purchased \$119,584 worth of water from the city over the course of a year.

Hermiston Foods has been a community partner over the years in a number of ways. It has donated produce to the Agape House's food bank, given tours to Leadership Hermiston classes learning about agriculture, and processed food for Farmers Ending Hunger.

The company has not released information yet on its plans for marketing or re-purposing the Hermiston Foods facility.

"The goal is to re-employ the workers as quickly as possible."

John Asher, Oregon Dislocated Worker Unit

She said production supervisors and quality assurance supervisors have also been encouraged to apply at NORPAC's Quincy facility.

Hermiston Foods has been an employer in Hermiston since 1990, with

Age 60+? Need legal help for:

Keeping your income • getting medical care • moving into or out of a care facility • housing problems • utility shut-offs • stopping abuse • contesting a guardianship?

For referral to an attorney, call toll-free: 1-855-673-2372.

For a free handbook, "Legal Issues for Older Adults," published by the Oregon State Bar, call: 503-945-6237 (available in English, Spanish, Vietnamese, Russian, or Chinese).

ADRC 1-855-ORE-ADRC (673-2372)
Aging and Disability Resource Connection of OREGON
www.ADRCoOregon.org
ADRC operates through the Oregon Department of Human Services



CONCEALED CARRY PERMIT CLASSES

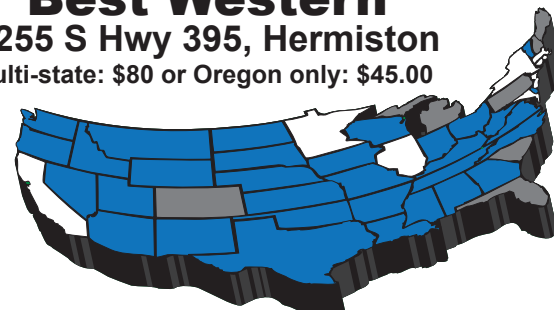
NOVEMBER 17TH • 1:00 & 6:00 PM

Best Western
2255 S Hwy 395, Hermiston
Multi-state: \$80 or Oregon only: \$45.00

Required class to get an Oregon or multi-State permit. Class includes:
• Fingerprinting & photo
• Oregon gun laws
• Washington gun laws
• Interstate travel laws
• Interaction with law enforcement
• Use of deadly force
• Firearm / ammunition / holster selection

360.921.2071

FirearmTrainingNW.com : FirearmTrainingNW@gmail.com



INTRODUCING PHONAK DIRECT CONNECTIVITY HEARING AIDS

- Direct connectivity to any cell phone *
- Hearing aids used as a wireless headset for hands-free calls
- Excellent TV sound quality¹ with hearing aids turned into wireless TV headphones

Phonak direct connectivity hearing aids offer universal connectivity to any cell phone* regardless of the brand or operating system. With direct connectivity hearing aids, Phonak offers a solution that provides true hands-free functionality just like a Bluetooth® wireless headset. The hearing aids utilize its built-in microphones to pick up the clients voice for phone calls. A call can be heard ringing directly in the hearing aids and with a simple push of a button, can be answered or rejected. This can be done at distance from the telephone e.g. while a client is positioned on the other side of a room.

Direct connectivity also extends to media playing with automatic connectivity to any TV or stereo system through a new and compact, multimedia hub called TV Connector. It delivers excellent stereo sound quality up to 15m away and does not require any additional streaming device.

With Phonak direct connectivity hearing aids, clients can enjoy the freedom of universal connectivity

RENATA ANDERSON M.A.
2237 Southwest • Court Place
Pendleton, OR 97801
541-276-5053

siemens | signia
Life sounds brilliant.

McKay Creek Estates
Caregiver SUPPORT
EDUCATIONAL SEMINAR SERIES

"Be The Best Caregiver & Feel Fantastic Doing It"

We understand the caregiver journey can be stressful and challenging. Our aim is to provide some clarity and support to caregivers helping seniors.

RSVP Today — **FREE** Caregivers Support Series

Thursday, September 21st at 2:00pm
Congestive Heart Failure (CHF) Facts
Caregivers can benefit from specialized training about CHF.

Thursday, October 19th at 2:00pm
Living Without Depression is Possible
You can help your loved one living with depression.

Thursday, November 16th at 2:00pm
Skip the Holiday Blues
Enhance your loved one's spirit during the holidays.

Thursday, December 21st at 2:00pm
Eating Is Essential to Promote Health
Learn to identify factors that may affect loss of appetite.

Location: St. Anthony Hospital, conference room #1: 2801 St. Anthony Way, Pendleton, OR 97801

Call us at (541) 276-1987 for more information or to reserve your seat(s).
Hurry space is limited. Refreshments provided.

McKay Creek Estates
1601 Southgate Place • Pendleton, OR 97801

Prestige Senior Living, L.L.C.
www.PrestigeCare.com