

Stars get ready to dance

By **TAMMY MALGESINI**
COMMUNITY EDITOR

Returning for a sixth season, Dancing with the Hermiston Stars features six community members who will take the stage with professional dancers from the Utah Ballroom Dance Company.

Presented by Desert Arts Council, money raised will help support the organization's mission of growing the arts. The winner will be determined by a combination of the judge's scores, audience votes and money raised.

Scoring a perfect 30 out of 30 from the judges during the 2015 event, Erica Sandoval is coming back for another chance to take home the coveted mirror ball trophy. An officer with the Hermiston Police Department, Sandoval performed a memorable mambo to a song from the movie "Dirty Dancing."

Edged out by audience voting and money donated on behalf of other dancers, Sandoval is already politicking on Facebook. She's looking to get extra votes through donations for the 2018 event.

"I've got another chance at this," she said. "I've got the dancing down but I'm gonna need your help with the rest."

Rather than dancing for individual charities like past shows, each of the dancers will raise money for Desert Arts Council, said Mary Corp, event co-chair. Others hoping to claim the trophy and bragging rights include Cameron Bendixsen, Josh Burns, Erik Juarez, Tricia Mooney and Ashley Seibel.

Bendixsen, who moved to Hermiston as a first grader in 1987, is excited to take the stage in support of the arts. A 1999 Hermiston graduate, Bendixsen returned in 2013 to join his father's law firm. The arts, he said, contribute to the creativity, diversity and unity of growing communities.

"Our youth can flourish



Sandoval



Bendixsen



Seibel



Mooney



Juarez



Burns

as they showcase their talents," Bendixsen said.

Moving to Hermiston six years ago, Burns is general manager at the Walmart DC. He enjoys the small-town feel of Hermiston. In addition, he said the community offers many opportunities, including those offered through Desert Arts.

"I believe we're better human beings when we've opened ourselves up to learn about others," he said. "Art allows us to do that in an enjoyable way, whatever the medium."

A Hermiston native, Juarez is an analyst at Good Shepherd Medical Center and serves as a commissioner for American Youth Soccer.

"I feel blessed to be able to be in a position where I can help the youth in Hermiston," he said.

In addition, Juarez is looking forward to raising money to benefit Desert Arts programs. He's especially supportive of showcasing local artists to assist in fur-

thering their careers.

Currently the Hermiston School District interim superintendent, Mooney started her career in education as a teacher in Hermiston in 1995. After working in the Pendleton School District from 2008-16, she returned "home" to a thriving community that possesses a "can do" attitude that supports its businesses, schools and citizens. Mooney especially appreciates the dedication of the Desert Arts Council in providing quality arts and entertainment opportunities.

"I want to give back in support of all that is given for our community," she said.

A Umatilla County native who has lived in Hermiston for 15 years, Seibel owns a photography business. She believes creativity builds confidence and enjoys being a part of nurturing and supporting youths in an expressive environment.

In addition, Seibel knows her way around the dance floor — she's an instructor at

IN BRIEF

Kids can visit Santa's Workshop

Cookie decorating, writing a letter to Santa and an ornament craft are all featured in Santa's Workshop. The free event is Friday from 6-8 p.m. at the Stanfield Public Library, 180 W. Coe Ave. Santa will be on hand for photos and to give gifts to children. For information, call the library at 541-449-1254.

Echo organizations to brighten holidays

Individuals and families in Echo who are in need during the holiday season may get a helping hand from local organizations. People can donate non-perishable and packaged foods, as well as fresh potatoes, onions or carrots. In addition to groups of students collecting food donations, items can be dropped off at Echo City Hall. Also, while there, people are invited to take a tag off the Giving Tree to purchase a gift for a needy child. The unwrapped gift needs to be returned no later than Friday, Dec. 15 at 11 a.m. Echo community members in need of holiday assistance can pick up an application at city hall. The forms must be completed and returned by Friday, Dec. 15 at 3:30 p.m. For more information, call 541-376-8411.

Grange announces holiday program

A Christmas program and dinner is planned at the Columbia Grange. The public is invited to the program, which features a potluck meal. The main dish is provided and people attending are asked to bring a salad, side dish or dessert to share. The event is Saturday at 2 p.m. at 32339 Diagonal Blvd., Hermiston. For more information, call Doris at 541-567-8663 or Scot at 541-278-0615.

Hermiston Farmers Market gets festive

Gift shopping, food and a visit from Santa Claus are all a part of the free Christmas Market. Organized by the Hermiston Farmers Market, the event features 56 vendors. The market is Saturday from 2-6 p.m. and Sunday from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the Hermiston Conference Center, 415 S. Highway 395. In addition to shopping, there will be crafts for children, a gift wrapping station and refreshments and baked goods will available for purchase. For information, contact BeAnn Smith at 541-701-7291, hermistonfarmersmarket@gmail.com or search www.facebook.com.

Designed by Karli Kretschmer, Age 9, La Grande, OR. She was the winner of our annual Holiday Design Contest.

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Donate This Holiday Season Toward These Great Causes During Our Annual **Community Bank Charity Drive**

Community Bank will match up to \$500 (per branch) at 50¢ on every dollar collected through Dec. 20, 2017!

Donations at our Pendleton Branch will support:

CMEO Children's Museum of Eastern Oregon

Donations at our Hermiston Branch will support:

The Hermiston Warming Station

Donations at our Heppner Branch will support:

The Neighborhood Center Food Bank

Donations at our Milton-Freewater Branch will support:

Milton-Freewater City Light & Power Energy Assistance Program

PLUS - The City of Milton-Freewater will match the funds collected up to **\$5,000!**

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