

# Hermiston School Board to vote Feb. 12 on spring break schedule

## Changing to the dates Washington uses is considered

By JAYATI RAMAKRISHNAN  
STAFF WRITER

The Hermiston School Board will vote at next month's meeting to decide whether to keep Hermiston's spring break schedule in line with the rest of the state, or to switch over to a schedule aligned with Washington schools. If the board approves the change, spring break would be the first week of April 2019, instead

of the last week of March. On Monday, members of the Education Council, a group of staff members representing each school and the district office, recommended that the board to switch to a Washington schedule. Sandra Rice, who represents the district office on the council, said they weighed many factors.

"Concerns ranged from scheduling conflicts, to (concerns) that staff were not surveyed on moving the spring break," she said. Delfino Osorio Garcia, a Hermiston High School staff member on the council, said they considered the people the change would impact.

"Ultimately, we decided, 'What's best for kids?'" Osorio Garcia said. He said with Hermiston's move to the Washington athletic conference starting next year, they decided aligning the vacation schedule with Washington's made the most sense.

"We knew it would have an impact on learning if we didn't go with Washington's spring break," Osorio Garcia said. But several teachers who were present at the meeting did not feel the change would be in the best interest of all students.

Josh Linn, a teacher at Rocky Heights Elementary School, had also spoken at a previous meeting about his concerns with a schedule that didn't align with the rest of the area's school districts. "The district reps say (the schedule) is good for kids," he said after Monday's meeting. "But only for high school sports kids. It doesn't benefit the elementary schools. It screws up our testing schedule, and it removes us from the community."

Linn said he and many other teachers had concerns, and that he planned to speak up against the proposed schedule change at the school board meeting on Feb. 12.

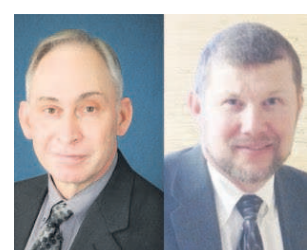
The event, called "Cafe with a Judge," was spearheaded by circuit court Judge Eva Temple, along with a local group from Hermiston that has been putting on multicultural events.

Temple and circuit court judges Dan Hill and Jon Lueuallen will be present at the event, which takes place Tuesday, Feb. 27 at 6 p.m. at Blue Mountain Community College campus, 980 S.E. Columbia Drive, Hermiston.

Alex Hobbs, a member of the group, said they have been trying to determine the best way to gather information from minority groups in Hermiston about their relationship with and view of the court system.

# City to facilitate dialog between courts, minority groups

HERMISTON HERALD



Dan Hill (left) and Jon Lueuallen (right)

A local circuit court judge and some Hermiston residents are putting together an event to start a conversation between the courts and minority communities.

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"We hope to get the conversation going about how local minority communities perceive the courts system, and how they have been treated by the courts," she said. "Have their experiences been negative or positive? Who do they talk to when they need help?"

She said the goal of the event is to offer a safe, informal forum for people to learn about the courts system and share their experiences. She said translators and child care will be provided.

If the event is successful, she said, they hope to host more like it.

# Altrusans lend a helping hand

HERMISTON HERALD

Members of Altrusa International of Hermiston helped in giving back, both locally and internationally, while working on projects during the Martin Luther King Jr. Day of Service.

A number of the club's members gathered in the morning to make sandwiches and snacks in preparation for an American Red Cross blood drive in Hermiston. The women then served the snacks and coffee, as well as checking in donors for the Jan. 15 event at Good Shepherd Medical Center.

Later in the day, members worked on an International Relations project. With fabric and sewing supplies, the Altrusans created colorful personal hygiene kits, which will be sent to girls in Haiti.

Altrusa clubs around the world are active in service in an effort to create better communities. The Hermiston group is promoting "New Hands in the New Year" to welcome potential new members interested in



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

During the Martin Luther King Jr. Day of Service, Karen Sherman, Ann Fialka and Edith Holt, members of Altrusa International of Hermiston, make snacks to serve at the American Red Cross blood drive at Good Shepherd Medical Center.

helping with service projects and making new friends. For more information, contact the local group via

hermistonaltrusa@gmail.com, visit www.district-twelve.altrusa.org or search Facebook.

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# Officers trained to recognize drug impairment

By JAYATI RAMAKRISHNAN  
STAFF WRITER

When a car swerves off the road but a Breathalyzer shows the driver has no alcohol in their system, police have to determine if the person is under the influence of something else and what is causing the impairment.

To answer these questions, most agencies have trained drug recognition experts, officers who use a 12-step protocol at a hospital or police station to recognize when someone is impaired by a substance other than alcohol.

Sgt. Josh Roberts, one of two such experts for the Umatilla County Sheriff's Office, said officers have to go through a lengthy training program to become certified.

After applying to the position, candidates spend a few days dedicated to basics.

"We make sure the candidates can appropriately do and interpret field sobriety tests," Roberts said.

Through a two-week course, candidates review how drugs affect a person's brain and body and study the specific effects of seven categories of drugs. Those include cannabis, prescription drugs, methamphetamines and cocaine.

The candidates also have to take a matrix that details symptoms and identifiers for the different drug categories. At the end of the class, they take an exam, which includes recreating the matrix from memory.

The matrix will allow them to eliminate certain substances based on behaviors symptomatic of a certain drug.

Officers search for horizontal gaze nystagmus (HGN), an involuntary jerking of the eyes.

"If I don't see HGN, I can rule out CNS depressants, inhalants, and dissociative anesthetics," Roberts said. "If we see HGN, we look at

those three categories as contenders for impairment."

Once they've completed the course, Roberts said students have a field certification training in Portland where they work on identifying people who are impaired.

Often times, Roberts said, the people who volunteer are homeless.

"We give them a sandwich and a soda," Roberts said. "We're not threatening anyone with jail, they're total volunteers."

He said while they occasionally find people in possession of drugs during the exercises, they typically focus on the task at hand.

"We always use officer discretion," he said. "If we find a residual amount, now under the new law it's a misdemeanor. Often, we'll just give them a warning."

Roberts added that the field exercises are easier to conduct in Oregon, because there is no law against the consumption of drugs — only against possession.

"If you've ingested it, it's not technically a crime," he said. "That gives us the freedom to walk around and ask people to volunteer."

"The volunteers we get are really vital to the process," he said. "It would be really difficult to hold field certification otherwise."

The final step of training is to confirm students' evaluations with toxicology tests.

"Each student has to have at least 80 percent of the evaluations confirmed, that what they called is actually confirmed in the toxicology test," Roberts said.

The drug expert program has been around since the 1990s, according to Hermiston Police Chief Jason Edmiston.

Roberts said over time, the drug recognition experts learn to look for signs that a person may have used mul-

multiple drugs, or if a person has been using drugs that may have quickly left their system.

"You see a change in how the body reacts over time," he said. "Some drugs are really fast-acting, like inhalants. We look at things like pulse rate, how eyes are moving. If there's involuntary jerking of the eyes, we put them through the same field sobriety tests."

Other tests include whether a person can divide their attention, and the degree to which a person's eyes are dilated. They will also check the person's vital signs, and examine their muscle tone and skin for signs of injection marks.

Capt. Travis Eynon pointed out that getting further testing from a drug recognition expert is voluntary for someone who has

been pulled over, but there is some incentive to agree to further tests. If an officer has reason to believe a person is impaired, they will still be required to submit a urine sample.

Edmiston said police spend an inordinate amount of energy on DUIIs.

"There's often more time and resources dedicated to one DUII investigation and arrests than for many felony crimes and arrests," he said.

He said while the drug expert positions are helpful in identifying impairment, they still pull officers from their duties.

He said in the past several years, all Class A misdemeanors, including DUIIs, have gone to the courts, which means pulling officers off their beats and paying for medical analysis.

And he is not aware of a Breathalyzer equivalent for other drugs.



Josh Roberts

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