

LOCAL TEAMS

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INSIDE

HOPEFUL

A Hermiston ministry provides hope and material support to the homeless. **PAGE A4**

TIGHT-KNIT

Hermiston Yarn Club binds members together as they make blankets and other items for those in need. **PAGE A6, A15**

UNPREPARED

Statewide kindergarten assessments show Hermiston students entering school less prepared. **PAGE A7**

BY THE WAY

Rocky Heights class sets reading record

Rocky Heights Elementary School students have a reason to celebrate. All of the students in Mrs. Melissa Doherty's third grade class achieved 100 percent of their accelerated reading goal this year. The Accelerated Reader program motivates student reading by setting point-based goals for students, then allowing them to choose books to read and answer questions about the books to earn points. Doherty's class earned the distinction of being the first class in Hermiston School District history to meet 100 percent of its goals.

Interested in building your knowledge of water law? The Oregon Water Coalition is hosting a "Water Rights 101" workshop next Tuesday from 7-8:15 p.m. at the Hermiston Community Center, 415 S. Highway 395. The workshop will be led by Greg Silbernagel, the local District 5 Watermaster. The workshop will provide an overview of common terms and concepts in water law such as priority date and beneficial use.

The workshop is free and open to the public, but an RSVP is requested. To

See BTW, A16

IMMUNIZATION EXCLUSION



DAY IS HERE



STAFF PHOTO BY E.J. HARRIS

Registered nurse Eryn Griffin gives a dose of a meningitis vaccination to Skyanne Gunn, 12, of Umatilla, on Thursday at the Umatilla County Health Department office in Hermiston.

Student immunizations must be up-to-date or they will be sent home

By KATHY ANEY
STAFF WRITER

Students who aren't up to date on their immunizations are being sent home today as part of the state's annual Exclusion Day.

Last year, Hermiston School District sent home 84 students. Spokeswoman Maria Duron said school secretaries have been reaching out to parents since January to make them aware that their child needed more vaccine-

sand/or needed their records updated to reflect their most recent immunizations in order to be able to continue attending public school.

"It is very important for our students to be up-to-date with their immunizations to help protect their peers and prevent others from contracting illnesses, some of which could be fatal," Duron wrote in an email.

Last year, measles broke out in a Somali-American community in Minneapolis. When the dust settled, Min-

nesota had notched 79 cases of measles — the state's largest outbreak in 30 years.

Twenty-one people, mostly children, were hospitalized. According to local media reports, fears that the measles-mumps-rubella (MMR) vaccine caused autism drove the slump in vaccinations from 92 to 42 percent in the community over 10 years as parents got exemptions for their kids.

See EXCLUSION, A16

530

Students were sent letters of warnings of potential exclusion by Umatilla County Public Health.

147

Students were sent home last year on Exclusion Day by the county.

84

Students were sent home last year in the Hermiston School District.

Lifeways hires consultant to restore confidence



Lifeways provides community mental health services in Umatilla County. A new consultant could help improve those services.

Paul Spriggs-Flanders comes from Wallowa Valley Center for Wellness

By KATHY ANEY
and JAYATI RAMAKRISHNAN
STAFF WRITERS

Lifeways recently got an ultimatum: change its ways or lose its contract.

The mental health provider responded by engaging consultant Paul Spriggs-Flanders to help the agency improve crisis services for Umatilla County.

In past months, Pendleton and Hermiston police chiefs and others have criticized Lifeways for leaving it up to law enforcement officers to de-escalate mental crises encountered on the streets. Often,

they said, people in crisis end up in jail or back on the streets without receiving adequate treatment. They also complained that Lifeways won't deal with people in mental crisis who are also intoxicated.

Kevin Campbell, CEO of contracting agency Greater Oregon Behavioral Health, Inc. issued a public statement in early January saying that if Lifeways didn't make "key changes" by Feb. 20, its contract for crisis services in Umatilla County would be terminated.

Spriggs-Flanders could be just the one to put Lifeways on a better course, said Campbell. He said Spriggs-Flanders, the founder of

the Wallowa Valley Center for Wellness, has worked in the trenches and recently retired from the Enterprise mental health center.

"He's managed crisis services. He's worked as a crisis worker. He's worked with numerous community partners such as law enforcement, courts and hospitals," Campbell said.

Spriggs-Flanders could not be reached for comment. A Wallowa Valley Center representative said he worked as a clinician for the group for many years, and was one of the main crisis

See LIFEWAYS, A16

