



Hike Through History  
Oregon Trail  
Wagon Ruts  
1/2 mile at end of  
asphalt path  
Motor Vehicles

# Hermiston Herald

A sign marking the Oregon Trail stands on the side of Highway 207 west of Echo.

STAFF PHOTO BY E.J. HARRIS

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 4, 2018

HermistonHerald.com

\$1.00

INSIDE

SECOND CHANCE

Drug court could be returning to Umatilla County  
PAGE A3

IN MEMORY

Stanfield coach who died in crash remembered for inspiring teens  
PAGE A6

GUN DEBATE

Sen. Ron Wyden talks gun control with students at Umatilla town hall  
PAGE A9

BY THE WAY

Increased parking coming to downtown

The city of Hermiston has started work on a new parking lot downtown that should net about 40 new spaces for the downtown district. The new parking lot will stretch behind the Hermiston Public Library and across Ridgeway Avenue to the Sunset Elementary tennis courts and brand new Harkenrider Center, which is wrapping up construction. The parking project, which will be finished this summer, has resulted in the temporary loss of parking behind the library.

On the bright side, cones re-routing traffic past the construction zone for the festival street in front of city hall were removed this week, freeing up some parking in front of the library that has been blocked off in recent months.

•••  
Hundreds of people walked through the streets of Hermiston and up to the top of the Hermiston

See BTW, A9

## THE DOCTOR IS OUT



STAFF PHOTO BY E.J. HARRIS

Dr. Joseph Gifford will retire this month after 44 years practicing medicine in Eastern Oregon as a family practitioner.

### Gifford chose medical career after serendipitous encounter

By KATHY ANEY  
STAFF WRITER

If not for a hitchhiking trip to Northeast Oregon at age 17, Joseph Gifford might never have become a doctor.

The Beaverton-area teenager thumbed his way to Umatilla, then called a friend in Hermiston from a phone booth. The friend wasn't home, but his father, Dr. Wendell Ford, fetched Gifford, brought him to Hermiston and cooked him dinner.

Partway through the meal, the doctor got a phone call and learned a patient needed an emergency appendectomy at the hospital. The teenager tagged along, scrubbed up and helped with the surgery.

"He had me hold the retractor," Gifford said.

"He had me hold the retractor. I felt about six inches off the ground. I thought, 'This is what I must do.' I was hooked."

Dr. Joseph Gifford

Getting this up-close view of surgery, Gifford, now 70, recalled a huge rush of realization.

"I felt about six inches off the ground," he said. "I thought, 'This is what I must do.' I was hooked."

Fast forward more than 50 years and Gifford will retire this month after 44 years of medicine in Eastern Oregon as a family practitioner. Across the street from Good Shepherd Medical Center in Hermiston, an urgent care clinic bears his name.

To be accepted into medical school, Gifford said he transformed from a mediocre student to an excellent one. He graduated from Walla Walla University with a degree in chemistry and entered Loma

See GIFFORD, A16

### Junior wrestlers headed for Reno Worlds Championships



STAFF PHOTO BY ALEXIS MANSANAREZ

Members of the Hermiston Wrestling youth team pose with their medals and trophies from the 2017-18 season.

By ALEXIS MANSANAREZ  
STAFF WRITER

When people outside of Eastern Oregon think Hermiston, they often think watermelons. After all, the fruit that will soon be in season adorns signage and water towers greeting passerby and residents alike.

But there is another crop Hermiston is known for — something far more fierce but also something that takes the same amount of care and attention. The city produces crops of grade-A wrestlers.

Producing the wrestlers that have helped Hermiston High School to 10 state championships starts with a strong feeder program. That youth program,

known as Hermiston Wrestling, has reached the final three months of its nine-month season and will be traveling to Reno at the end of the week for the 2018 Flo Reno Worlds Championships.

Former youth wrestler, Hermiston and Oregon State alumnus and now coach Kyle Larson is taking one of his biggest groups ever.

"Last year, we might have taken the same amount, but we had quite a few high school kids and a few junior high kids that were going with us, but for elementary, absolutely this is the most we've taken for that age group," he said after one hour

See RENO, A16

