

# NURSE

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Maria left in Puerto Rico.

The federation in October sent 40 nurses there. Feldman said they helped in an array of medical situations, from people suffering mental health issues to citizens stuck in homes and coping with diabetes or high blood pressure.

"They were there for three weeks and really had a huge impact," he said.

This time the federation will land 10 nurses on the island of St. Croix to assess the general health of 5,000 children, while Cline and 11 more nurses go to the island of St. Thomas to provide check-ups on 7,000 children. A nurse from Bend and another from Medford are making the journey. The group returns home next Saturday, giving them five days to complete the work.

"Our goal is we're going to get every child seen," Cline said. "I'd hate to be that nurse that misses the one kid."

The Oregon Nurses Association in its March 9 newsletter told its members the American Federation of Teachers was looking for volunteers for the effort. Cline, a nurse of 19 years with 18 at the hospital, said she has never done a medical mission. She and her husband, Bill, a cattle rancher, have three grown children, none at home. Helping children is core to who she is, Cline said, so she asked her husband what he thought of her going.

"He said I just have to do it," she recalled.

In addition to the student screenings, the nurses will check the schools for health risks, such as asbestos exposure or the spread of dangerous mold.

"These schools have been open all this time, and no one knows the condition of these

schools," Feldman said.

"We're just kind of the first eyes on the ground," Cline said, and what they report helps determine future actions.

The federation also asked nurses to bring hospital supplies. Nick Bejarano, Good Shepherd communications director, helped Cline load up a box of gloves, dressings, ice packs and more.

"We love to support this kind of initiative," Bejarano said. "It's a selfless act to help others in need."

Cline said she wishes she could bring more, but the flights have weight and size restrictions, particularly for the "hopper planes" they will take between islands.

Cline was on a planning phone call Thursday night. She said they were told not to bring coats or sweatshirts because temperatures at the scene are plenty warm, and don't plan on having air conditioning in their resort rooms.

Yes, she said, they are in a resort, but one that remains closed.

Comfortable shoes are another must because they will be on their feet for long stretches. Cline said nurses tend to have that covered.

U.S. territories in the Caribbean have far to go in their recovery from last year's hurricanes. Sections of Puerto Rico still lack power, and major factories there remain offline and unable to produce drugs, fluids, and other medical resources for hospitals around the globe. Cline said Good Shepherd, like other hospitals, is keeping close watch as those supplies dwindle.

Researchers at the Colorado State University Tropical Meteorology Project predict this Atlantic hurricane season will be a little above average with 14 storms, and seven will become major hurricanes. The season is less than eight weeks away and lasts until Nov. 30.

wide public education support campaign.

"I want to be a video game designer who builds three-dimensional worlds," he said.

In addition, a trio of **Umatilla High School** seniors are featured in "GRADitude" videos. **Joel Escamilla, Leonel Corona and Daisy Garcilazo** expressed appreciation to teachers that made an impact on them.

Escamilla and Corona said **Kelly Allen**, who previously taught and coached at Umatilla, reached out to provide guidance when they were underclassmen. For the video, the two students visited Allen in his classroom in the Hermiston School District.

"I was on the verge of just giving up on school," Escamilla said. "He motivated me to come up and get my work done and be better in life."

Also, things started adding up when math teacher **Nancy Swarat** noticed a change with Garcilazo. After being a top student, she started missing classes during her junior year. Garcilazo said Swarat, who had a broken leg at the time, chased her down in the hallway to find out why she was slipping up in school.

Coordinated by the **Oregon School Boards Association**, the Promise's goal is to highlight public education. To view student profiles and videos, visit [www.promiseoregon.org](http://www.promiseoregon.org).

*You can submit items for our weekly By The Way column by emailing your tips to [editor@hermistonherald.com](mailto:editor@hermistonherald.com) or share them on social media using the hashtag #HHBTW.*



STAFF PHOTO BY E.J. HARRIS

Human resources office manager Kristina Olivas presents a check to Lions Club representative Phil Hamm during a 20-year celebration for the Walmart Distribution Center in Hermiston.

# WALMART

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He also praised the associates and managers there for an impressive safety record that continues to improve. He said having the "best supply chain" will be what helps Walmart continue to succeed in a changing era.

"We look forward to the example you will set across our organization," he said.

The Hermiston Walmart DC isn't just important to the company — it's also an economic driver for Umatilla County. The DC employs about 1,100 people. Mark Morgan, assistant city manager for Hermiston, said about eight percent of jobs on the west side of Umatilla County are found at the DC. That doesn't count the hundreds of people who work for the Walmart store also found in Hermiston, or an estimated additional 1,100 jobs created indirectly by the presence of the DC and its employees. The city has grown by more than 6,000 people since the DC came to town.

"Walmart really is the Hermiston community," Morgan said. "If not for Walmart we wouldn't have the same community here."

That's the type of thing many of the company's employees wish people understood when they criticized the massive corporation. Becky Lowrance, who has worked at the DC since it first opened in 1998,

said critics often miss all of the community service and donations provided by the company in addition to providing stable employment for so many people.

She pointed to the Walmart Heart Program, in which drivers for the company "adopt" children with chronic or terminal illnesses for a special day focused on lifting their spirits.

"We have a lot of drivers volunteer their time to it," she said. "For me, it has been my baby for a long time. I tear up any time I think about it."

Lowrance was working as a waitress when the DC was being built, and decided to apply after some of the managers there for the hiring spree started frequenting the restaurant where she worked. She started out in the warehouse and is now the transportation operations manager.

Miguel A. Ornelas, another operations manager, said he started at the Distribution Center after graduating from college and figuring he could work for Walmart until he got a "real job." Twenty years later he is happy to still be with the DC, where 80 percent of the management was promoted from within.

"They were so growth-focused on the associates and their development," he said. "They made me feel part of a team."

After speeches, cake and a special recognition by name of each of the 50 employees who have been with the DC from the begin-

ning, attendees were offered tours of the facility.

The distribution center acts as a hub, taking in shipments of everything from dog food to kayaks from the company's various suppliers and then sorting them into trucks bound for 106 individual stores across the western United States.

"Say Johnson & Johnson sends us a box with 70 shampoos and a store only needs 12, we can pluck those out of a box and send them to the store," said HR office manager Kristina Olivas during a tour.

The process is helped along by a combination of 22 miles of conveyor belts winding through the facility and an army of associates who can wrap up individual items on pallets or handle items too large or fragile for the conveyor belts. After boxes are unpacked, flattened and sent back out of the center in loads they will be reused multiple times until they wear out.

At the end of the process are the associates who load the outbound trucks.

"It's not a matter of just loading everything onto

trailers, it's actually quite intricate," Olivas said, likening it to "a giant game of Tetris."

The associates must quickly fit a variety of odd-shaped cases and pallets in as efficiently as possible, keeping labels upright while also taking into account factors like a safe weight distribution for when trailers are turning sharply.

The massive facility is the last of that specific design built before a new design was implemented, but the company is impressed with what the facility's employees have accomplished, and Burns said as general manager he hoped everyone who worked at the Hermiston Walmart Distribution Center was extremely proud of their work.

"I just want to close with one word and that's 'proud,'" he said. "... This team is amazing, what we do here is amazing and spread across 20 years that's amazing."

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# BTW

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**Sandstone** gathered at the **Hermiston High School** commons to play games and activities, listen to a panel discussion featuring high school girls from each grade level, and enjoy a fashion show.

The event has been a district tradition for more than a decade, giving middle school girls a chance to hear from their peers what to expect at the next level of schooling. The event is organized by **Altrusa International** and Hermiston High School leadership students.

**Leadership Hermiston Class 21** collected nearly \$22,000 in donations for their "Stuff the Bus" service project this weekend. The class parked school buses outside Fiesta Foods, Safeway and Walmart and requested donations of supplies or cash from shoppers. They collected donations for four local organizations — **Agape House, Hermiston Domestic Violence shelter, Desert Rose Ministries** and the **Hermiston Warming Station**. The group collected more than \$21,000 in supplies and close to \$800 in cash donations Saturday, and spent Sunday sorting and delivering the items to the organizations.

Education is building promises for the future for a **Umatilla School District** student. **Alejandro Escovedo of Clara Brownell Middle School** was recently featured as part of "The Promise of Oregon," a state-

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