



BULLDOG BOYS, GIRLS OUT DUEL PENDLETON AT NET

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WINS GIVE MOMENTUM INTO TENNIS DISTRICTS THIS WEEKEND

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INSIDE

AN EVEN SPLIT

Umatilla County and the city of Umatilla disagree over what constitutes a fair share of money from new data centers.

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ROCK SHOW

Agates, petrified wood and other natural curiosities on display this weekend in Hermiston.

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BOOK BATTLE

Hermiston School District gives explanation for labeling Battle of the Books selection inappropriate.

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BY THE WAY

Local paramedic battles cancer

A Hermiston paramedic is battling cancer, and his colleagues are trying to help him pull through.

Mark Johnson, a paramedic with the Umatilla County Fire District and in Hermiston for the past 18 years, was diagnosed with lymphoma a few months ago. Umatilla County Fire District Battalion Chief Jimmy Davis said Johnson is receiving treatment at a Seattle hospital, and the firefighter's union has set up a GoFundMe page, asking the community to assist with costs the family is facing.

Davis said Johnson's cancer was determined to be job-related, which will alleviate some of the medical bills. He said the GoFundMe was to help the family keep up with other bills and costs.

A Hermiston clinic has welcomed a provider back into the fold after a decade away.

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MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS MONTH

MIND, BODY & SOUL



STAFF PHOTO BY E.J. HARRIS

Clara Brownell Middle School eighth-grader Kyleigh Wheeler, left, and seventh-grader Evelyne Avita are in the leadership class that hand made signs and placed them around the school.

Umatilla shows its students that physical and mental health go together

By JAYATI RAMAKRISHNAN
STAFF WRITER

Jumping rope or eating an apple is good for more than just your physical wellness — it can help keep your mind healthy, too.

May is Mental Health Awareness Month, and the city of Umatilla and the Umatilla School District are going all in with a focus on mental health and the many things that contribute to it.

Events held in Umatilla parallel the national Mental Health Awareness Month theme “whole body,” and will help residents understand the connections between physical activity, nutrition, and mental well-being.

The school district has released a calendar with daily suggestions for improving mental health, broken down into weekly themes that encourage families to do a different exercise or activity each day. There will also

be free events throughout the month, including parent classes and a 5k run/walk.

Selene Torres-Medrano, a Umatilla city councilor and school district employee, is the driving force behind the monthlong recognition of mental health and wellness. She said several local organizations will be at the events, including Lifeways, Community Counseling Solutions, Domestic Violence Services and Good Shepherd Health Care System.

Torres-Medrano, an ELL Family Outreach Coordinator at the Umatilla School District, said she has directly observed the need for students to have mental health services.

“Umatilla is a very high-poverty area,” she said. “With that comes domestic violence, drug abuse — it all comes down to mental health. People don’t get the help they need.”

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Mental health tips and self-care activities

- Tell at least one person how you are feeling
- Tell someone two positive traits about yourself
- Repeat five times: “I am strong, I am special, I am beautiful, I am brave”
- Write a list of the things that worry or stress you
- Go outside for 15 minutes and identify the sounds around you
- Take five deep breaths
- List five things you are grateful for
- Go for a 10-minute walk
- Dance to three of your favorite songs
- Eat three servings of vegetables
- Make your own food today
- Drink at least three cups of water
- Try a new fruit or vegetable

Events for Umatilla Mental Health Awareness Month

Tuesday, May 16 - Parent Zumba class, 6-8 p.m.
Saturday, May 19 - 5K Race/Walk and mental health fair, 10 a.m., Village Square Park
Thursday, May 24 - Parent cooking class, 6-8 p.m., McNary Heights Elementary School.

Hermiston Raceway rebranded, streamlined

Walden family rejuvenates racetrack north of town

By ERIC SINGER
STAFF WRITER

HERMISTON — The three-eighths-mile paved oval racetrack that sits off Highway 395 just north of Hermiston has been known by several different names in its existence, from Umatilla Speedway and Race City USA to Columbia Motor Speedway and Hermiston Super Oval.

This year the aging track has yet another new name — Hermiston Raceway — and another chance at life with the help of former racer and Tri-Cities native Greg Walden.

And no, not the U.S. Representative from Oregon.

This Greg Walden, 55, signed a three-year lease with an option to

buy to operate the track in February, aiming to make Hermiston Raceway a destination again for race fans at the same time that similar tracks have closed down around the region. He had interest in leasing the Yakima Speedway this winter, but turned his focus to Hermiston when Yakima was sold and closed.

“This track was available so we were like, ‘Well, let’s see what we can do,’” Walden said during an interview inside the track’s office on Saturday. “And we’re only two races in now, but there’s hope and there’s early signs of life.”

Walden brings nearly four decades of experience in the local racing world as a driver, a promoter, and a

See RACEWAY, A16



STAFF PHOTO BY ERIC SINGER

Tri-Cities natives Wayne Walden, left, and his son Greg Walden, right, are the newest operators of Hermiston Raceway. Wayne operated their hometown Tri-City Raceway in the 1980s and '90s and Greg used to race at Hermiston during his racing career spanning three decades.



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