

MENTAL

continued from Page A1

She added that while the school's counselors do a great job, it's hard for them to keep up with the number of kids that need help.

Neighboring school districts often face similar concerns — following the suicides of young people in the area, Hermiston organizations, including Good Shepherd, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and Desert Rose Ministries have all held events this year to teach parents, teens and others about recognizing signs of depression and suicidal ideation.

Torres-Medrano also has a personal connection to the subject. A Umatilla native, she has suffered from depression and anxiety herself. That, along with an abusive background, had an effect on her that she didn't initially realize.

"I didn't learn about it until people started reaching out to me," she said. After finishing her bachelor's degree, Torres-Medrano took a year off before applying to medical school. As she took time to address her own



STAFF PHOTO BY E.J. HARRIS

Umatilla city councilor Selene Torres-Medrano puts up a flyer for a mental health fair on Tuesday at the city hall building in Umatilla. Torres-Medrano is spearheading a first mental health awareness month for the city of Umatilla and the Umatilla School District.

needs, she observed that others may be struggling with the same concerns.

"We have to give kids the tools to deal with trauma," she said. "It's not enough to tell them that higher education is important."

For the Mental Health Awareness Month project Torres-Medrano is spearheading, week one (held this week) is called "let's talk about it," simply discussing

with students and families what it means to be aware of mental health. Week two, "mind and soul," teaches students how to be aware of

their thoughts and feelings. Week three focuses on the connection between physical and mental health, and week four highlights the impor-

ance of nutrition.

The daily activities and tips include thought exercises ("tell someone two positive traits about yourself" or "ask an adult one thing they do to help themselves feel better"), physical activities like going for a 10 minute walk, and healthy eating suggestions.

The month will also feature several classes for parents and community members, including a Zumba class and one about "good mood foods," showing parents the connection between eating well and feeling good. The daily events will culminate in a 5K run/walk and mental health fair on May 19.

Torres-Medrano said she's been amazed by the level of support community members have shown for Mental Health Awareness Month. At the city council meeting, councilors adopted a proclamation designating May as Mental Health Month in Umatilla.

Clara Brownell Middle School counselor Nayeli Guzman said over the past few weeks, the school has seen an increase in suicidal ideation. She said the counselors make sure they let students know they're being heard and can check in whenever they need.

She said throughout the month, they will be putting up posters about mental health statistics, and messages encouraging students to seek help if they need it.

Umatilla School District superintendent Heidi Sipe said she was excited for the events this month.

"Students know it's OK to ask for help when needed and understand that seeking services is simply a part of health and not a stigma," Sipe said. "I'm excited to see Mental Health month recognized in our schools and community, and hope it helps engage others in the conversation about supporting all in our community."



STAFF PHOTO BY ERIC SINGER

Drivers in the street stock class come around turn four at Hermiston Raceway on Saturday night.

RACEWAY

continued from Page A1

fan. He got his start in the sport in the late 1970s when he started driving at the age of 16. Over the course of his career, which he ended in 2006, Walden raced at Hermiston several times. He got into the sport through his father Wayne Walden, who also drove race cars at an early age.

Wayne was a businessman that "was always looking for ways to make money," Greg said, and partnered with three other individuals to take on their hometown Tri-City Raceway when it became available in 1982. Within three years, Wayne became the sole operator of the track. And along with business acumen and a passion for racing, he developed a knack for promotion and grew the fast half-mile track into a popular one in the Northwest.

Greg was in line to take over what had become the family business until the track was sold in 1998. Greg and his family then started a screenprinting and embroidery business in Kennewick that year, and he used his business as a reason to remain involved at race tracks in the region, selling souvenir T-shirts at many of them. Being around the track each summer while holding onto his passion for the sport, Greg knew he wanted to get back into track operations. He just had to wait for an opportunity.

In only four months operating the Hermiston Raceway, Walden has already made plenty of upgrades to the track that benefit both drivers and fans. Most significantly, more than \$12,000 was spent on fixing the wooden grandstands and making them safe for spectators. Upgrades were also made to lighting on the concourse and in the pits, to make the experience better for race teams.

Walden has also revamped the racing schedule at the track. Races are held every other Saturday night now instead of

weekly, in hopes of attracting more cars each night to create a better product. He also aims to keep the races moving quickly, limiting the downtime and creating constant action. Pre-race qualifying was eliminated, and the races will line up based on points standings. And trophy dashes are replaced with heat races prior to the main events.

"As long as it's entertaining and fast-paced," Walden said. "We're a form of entertainment, and if we think we're just in the racing business, then it doesn't work. We're in the entertainment business, it's got to be exciting. We want to deliver a good program for the fans and racers, and with that we're able to sell it to businesses to bring their people out."

Hermiston Raceway has been open for two races now following Saturday's West Coast Late Model Series headliner, and Walden is impressed with the early results. The attendance has been solid, with the grandstands being nearly at capacity on Saturday. And the few dozen cars competing has made for good entertainment for the fans.

Walden also credits numerous track employees — from pit crew to the flagger to the scorers — that remained from previous regimes as a big part of the early success, too.

"The team I inherited want to see it thrive," Walden said. "They want to be proud of the place where they spend their time and that's important."

Racing returns to Hermiston on May 19 with Northwest Pro 4 Alliance stock cars, as well as the typical late models, street stocks, super mini and mini stocks, legends, bombers and hornet classes.

"I'm just excited there's hope," Walden said. "Last night we camped in Hermiston, in my motor home at (former) Umatilla Speedway and I told my wife, 'How in the world did I end up here running this race track?' I never thought that, but it came available and somebody had to so why not me?"



— SWITCH AND GET —
50% OFF
NO TRADE-IN REQUIRED

Choose from the latest
Samsung Galaxy Smartphones



SAMSUNG Galaxy S9



SAMSUNG Galaxy Note8



SAMSUNG Galaxy S8

Prices vary. Promotional pricing requires purchase of a new qualifying Smartphone, Total Plan, new line, new customer port-in, credit approval and Device Protection+, and comes via monthly bill credit on a 30-mo. 0% APR and \$0 down Retail Installment Contract. Taxes and certain charges, such as USF and RCRF, apply. Additional terms and restrictions apply.



U.S. Cellular® was ranked "Highest Network Quality Performance among Wireless Cell Phone Users in the North Central Region" by J.D. Power.

Disclaimer: U.S. Cellular received the highest numerical score in the North Central region in the J.D. Power 2016 V2, 2017 V1 and V2 and 2018 V1 (tie) U.S. Wireless Network Quality Performance Studies. 2018 Volume 1 study based on 38,595 total responses from five providers, measuring the network quality experienced by customers with wireless carriers, surveyed July–December 2017. Your experiences may vary. Visit jdpower.com. Things we want you to know: New consumer or small business (20 lines or fewer) port-in and Total Plan required. Purchase of device via 0% APR 30-month Retail Installment Contract, credit approval and Device Protection+ required. Tax due at sale. Taxes and certain charges, such as USF and RCRF, apply. A Regulatory Cost Recovery Fee applies; this is not a tax or government required charge. Additional fees, taxes, terms, conditions and coverage areas may apply and vary by plan, service and phone. Offers valid at participating locations only and cannot be combined. Minimum monthly price of Device Protection+ is \$9.99 per Smartphone. A service fee/deductible per approved claim applies. You may cancel anytime. Property insurance is underwritten by American Bankers Insurance Company of Florida and provided under a Master Policy issued to U.S. Cellular. You will be the certificate holder on U.S. Cellular's Master Policy for loss/theft benefits. Service Contract Obligor is Federal Warranty Service Corporation in all states except CA (Sureway, Inc.) and OK (Assurant Service Protection, Inc.). Limitations and exclusions apply. Ask an associate for more details. Offer applies to base-memory model only. Offer: 50% off the current full retail price of qualifying base-memory model Smartphone will come via monthly bill credit on a 30-month Retail Installment Contract; 0% APR. Bill credit applied within three bill cycles and ends when balance is paid. Line must remain in good standing. In the event of cancellation of service, customer will be responsible for the entire Retail Installment Contract balance. The early upgrade program is not available with this offer. Kansas Customers: In areas in which U.S. Cellular receives support from the Federal Universal Service Fund, all reasonable requests for service must be met. Unresolved questions concerning services availability can be directed to the Kansas Corporation Commission Office of Public Affairs and Consumer Protection at 1-800-662-0027. Limited-time offer. While supplies last. Trademarks and trade names are the property of their respective owners. See store or uscellular.com for details. ©2018 U.S. Cellular