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A fire at the Hermiston Adventist Church caused an estimated \$3 million in damage early Sunday morning
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OLD SCHOOL

Community editor Tammy Malgesini muses about proper attire and snacks for a high school graduation.
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BY THE WAY

Festival street will open with celebration July 14

Hermiston's new festival street will have its official grand opening on July 14 as part of Funfest, an annual downtown celebration that includes vendors and family activities.

City manager Byron Smith said at Monday's city council meeting the street in front of city hall should be open to traffic sooner than that. The city is just waiting for grates to go around the newly-planted trees to protect them from cars, and he said those should come by the end of next week.

The grand opening celebration will take place 1 p.m. on Saturday, July 14 in front of city hall, 180 NE Second Street. That block of Second Street has been re-designed to include more landscaping, design work and a more pedestrian-friendly shape that does not include curbs. The city hopes to use it for community events to draw more foot traffic downtown.

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Construction behind the Metro Mart on the corner of West Highland Avenue and Southwest 11th Street is leading toward a new car wash, according to building permits issued by the city's building department. A call

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Safety First



STAFF PHOTO BY E.J. HARRIS
Instructor McKinsay Naillon coaches Delilah Boyd, 4, on how to float on her back during a level 1 swim class Monday at the Hermiston Family Aquatic Center.

Hermiston Family Aquatic Center teaches 1,700 students to swim

By JADE MCDOWELL
STAFF WRITER

A day at the pool or the beach can be relaxing, but for someone who doesn't know how to swim, it can quickly turn deadly.

That's something the staff of the Hermiston Family Aquatic Center is hoping to avoid. They're teaching swim lessons to more than 1,700 people this summer, from toddlers to adults. The adult class is new this year, spurred by a recent drowning death of a Umatilla man who jumped into the Columbia River to save his son despite not knowing how to swim.

"It was heartbreaking," aquatic center manager Kasia Robbins said. "We want to try to prevent it from happening ever again."

The new class, held Tuesday and Thursday evenings at 8:05 p.m., has attracted participants from ages 17 to 57 (the class is open to ages 16 and up). The HFAC is also offering more children's lessons than usual this year and as a result still has slots available. Usually the aquatic center has difficulty finding enough summer staff to meet the demand for lessons, but Robbins said this year they have more staff than ever before, at



STAFF PHOTO BY E.J. HARRIS
Instructor Savannah Sharp, 15, watches as a swimmer emerges from the water while teaching a level 6 class swim class Monday at the Hermiston Family Aquatic Center.

over 100.

There are two levels of parent and tot classes for infants and toddlers to get used to the water, followed by six different levels of 25-minute classes. On Monday morning a mix of skill levels were practicing in different parts of the pool. Two very young girls were practicing bouncing up and down in the shallow end to keep their heads above water, while in the lap pool a handful of elementary school-aged children used kickboards and practiced swimming freestyle.

"The young kids are learning the water safety aspect, when is it safe to get in the water and how to exit and enter," Robbins said. "Other kids learn how to stay afloat, how a stroke affects their endurance. It really ranges with age."

On the more advanced end of the spectrum is the hour-long junior lifeguard class, which gives teens a taste of the exercises they would practice to be a lifeguard — potentially lifesaving

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Turning the tassel

By JAYATI RAMAKRISHNAN
STAFF WRITER

As they graduated, Hermiston High School's class of 2018 celebrated everything that brought them to that point — as well as the changes ahead.

"I thank you for the love, the happiness and the tears, but most of all, our history," said valedictorian and class speaker Dylan Westfall. "Let's go see what's out there."

The largest class to graduate from Hermiston in the history of the school, 342 seniors walked across the stage at the Toyota Center in Kennewick on Thursday. The class boasted 10 valedictorians and several successes in academic, athletic and musical endeavors, noted Princi-

pal Tom Spoo.

"The class of 2018 qualifies as one of the finest in Hermiston High School history," Spoo said.

Students chose to remember not just the high points, but the challenges that had shaped them. Westfall noted several dates in the last few years that had been milestones for their class.

He recalled Nov. 25, 2017, the day Hermiston High School won the OSAA 5A football championship. He recalled one of the toughest days, when a classmate passed away.

"Moments like those test us as a family," he said. "That day, our family got a little closer."

The audience heard from Salma

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STAFF PHOTO BY KATHY ANEY
Hermiston High School seniors listen to a class speaker Thursday night during commencement exercises at the Toyota Center in Kennewick. For more photos, see A15.



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