

Hermiston's Jordan Ramirez catches the ball in the end zone in front of Kennewick's Gabe Cervantes in the Bulldogs' 26-25 loss to the Lions on Friday in Hermiston.

STAFF PHOTO BY E.J. HARRIS

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Umatilla County Sheriff Rowan explained his support of a repeal of Oregon's sanctuary state law to Hermiston's Hispanic Advisory Committee.

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FREE FOOD

Hermiston School District students benefit from free breakfast at school.

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1,000 MILES

Charles Clupny trekked across France and Spain to raise money for CASA.

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BY THE WAY

New bleachers increase seating at Kennison Field

Kennison Field is open to even more football fans now, thanks to collections by the **Hermiston Sports Boosters** and a donation from a local family. There are now some new bleachers at the stadium, which seat 657 people. **Paul Barnett**, one of the Boosters board members, said the bleachers cost \$110,000, and about half of that came from a donation from the **O'Gorman family**.

"The project was mainly due to the fact that we felt like we were at capacity," Barnett said. "We hope to see an uptick of people traveling from Tri-Cities."

Barnett said the donation from the O'Gorman family allowed the Boosters to save some of their funds for the next major project.

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Fresh off a trip to Washington, D.C. to dis-

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Projects delayed as contractors scarce



Blue Chavez, of Challis Concrete Construction in La Grande, sweeps some freshly dried concrete Tuesday near the intersection of 11th and Orchard in Hermiston.

STAFF PHOTO BY KATHY ANEY

Construction stalls when subcontractors get busy

By **JADE MCDOWELL**
STAFF WRITER

Hermiston residents are looking forward to construction wrapping up on new traffic signals on Northwest 11th Street after months of navigating through an ever-changing pattern of orange traffic cones surrounding two intersections.

The new signals should have been up and running already. But the project was delayed after no one bid on it during the summer of 2017, and the Oregon Department of Transportation had to wait until fall before trying again.

It's a common tale in Eastern Oregon: Shortages of general contractors and subcontractors like electricians can delay projects big and small.

Perhaps the most obvious example in Hermiston is a long-anticipated Ranch & Home store south of town. Nine months after the store was originally slated to open, speculating on its real opening date has become a favorite local pastime.

The store has stayed mum on that date (calls over the past few months by the *East Oregonian* haven't been returned) but when the business asked the city of Hermiston for an extension on incentives the city had offered at the beginning of the year, it blamed not being able to find electrical subcontractors for the delay.

An August survey by the Associated General Contractors of America showed it's a nationwide trend. The association found 70 percent of the 1,600 construction firms surveyed reported having difficulty

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Hermiston School District sued for \$38.9 million

Family claims district did not follow protocol after football injury

By **JAYATI RAMAKRISHNAN**
STAFF WRITER

A Hermiston family is suing the Hermiston School District, several coaches and an athletic trainer for \$38.9 million, claiming district athletics staff in 2016 allowed their son to play a football game after sustaining a head injury, leading to long-term damage.

Todd and Dawna Martin filed a lawsuit last Wednesday in Umatilla County Circuit Court, asking for a jury trial and alleging that their son, Connor, sustained permanent injuries

to his head, back and neck, and now has difficulty participating in regular activities. The suit states that Connor was injured when playing football as a member of Hermiston's junior varsity team in September and October 2016. The lawsuit says Hermiston athletic staff did not inform his parents about their son's injuries, nor did they conduct the proper tests to determine Connor's readiness to return to football.

In addition to the district, the family is suing athletic director Larry Usher, athletic trainer Dan Emery, head football coach David Faeteete, and junior varsity football coach Matthew Bruck in their personal capacities. The family is asking for \$25 million in damages for Connor's bodily injury, anxiety and impaired



HH FILE PHOTO

A Hermiston couple claims their son, Connor Martin, sustained a concussion during a game that was not handled properly by Hermiston School District. They are suing the Hermiston School District and personnel in the athletics department for nearly \$39 million.

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