

Encore Wellness fills niche for trees in Umatilla

By TAMMY MALGESINI
COMMUNITY EDITOR

People searching for fresh-cut Christmas trees from charitable groups this holiday season may have a harder time finding the perfect tree. However, before dashing your hopes and buying a manufactured tree — look further, as they are available in the area.

As the supply of trees has dwindled across the nation, it has impacted local organizations. According to the *Associated Press*, the yuletide market decline sprouted a decade ago with an overabundance of Christmas trees and the Great Recession, which drove many growers out of business.

The Umatilla Volunteer Firefighters Association announced it wouldn't be selling trees this year. In addition to rising costs and shrinking proceeds — the group raises money to fund community projects, including a Christmas basket program providing food and gifts for needy families — increased time demands has limited people's availability to run the Christmas tree lot.

The Boardman Firefighters Association also are feeling the heat. Although their sales started Sunday, Richard Hernandez said people won't have as many choices.

"Due to rising cost and having to get a new vendor, we will be limited to selling only 100 trees this year," he said.

The Hermiston Kiwanis



Mark Keith, Jennifer Armstrong and Richard Payan invite people to Coach Payan's Christmas Trees in Umatilla. It's open daily from noon to 8 p.m., with proceeds helping local youth sports teams.

Club, who have sold Christmas trees since the '70s, are continuing with the fundraising effort, said Doug Barak. In recent years, the service club has ordered 400 trees and sold out within two weeks. The group, Barak said, began sales Tuesday and will man the Christmas tree lot at the Hermiston Community Center until all are gone.

A handful of people associated with Encore Wellness 4 Life decided to branch out. Coach Payan's Christmas Trees is set up outside the recently relocated wellness clinic at 82346 Bucks Lane — near the Highway

730 and 395 junction. While looking for the perfect Douglas, grand or noble fir, people are invited to warm up around the fire pit and enjoy hot chocolate, apple cider and candy canes. The lot is open daily from noon to 8 p.m. However, if people come by Monday through Friday mornings, clinic staff will assist them.

For the past decade, Jennifer Armstrong has provided sports physicals to Umatilla students. With Family Health Associates now contracting with Umatilla's hospital district, the nurse practitioner pondered new ways to give back to the

community. Her husband, Mark Keith, who previously assisted with the Umatilla firefighters tree lot, wanted people to still be able to purchase Christmas trees in town. Kelly Payan, Encore's operations manager, and her husband, Richard, dashed at the chance to help.

"What better way to give back than during the holiday season?" said Richard Payan, the lot's namesake. "A lot of families can't go outside the area to get a tree."

Youth sports teams are invited to contact Coach Payan's Christmas Trees to schedule time to work in the

Charitable Christmas tree sales

Boardman Firefighters Association
•Sundays-Saturdays; 8 a.m. to 8 p.m.
•Boardman Fire Station, 300 S.W. Wilson Lane
\$20-\$35/Douglas, \$40-\$70/noble. Ask attendants about special ordering other sizes/types (541-481-3473).
Camp Morrow
•Daily through Dec. 17; 9 a.m. to 9 p.m.
•New Hope Community Church, 1350 S. Highway 395, Hermiston
\$55+/noble; lower prices on Douglas firs when they arrive. Benefits the faith-based camp/retreat center (541-567-8441).
Coach Payan's Christmas Trees
•Sundays-Saturdays; noon to 8 p.m.

•82346 Bucks Lane, Umatilla
\$45-\$69. Douglas, grand, noble. Benefits local youth sports teams (541-922-1750).
Hermiston Kiwanis
•Sundays-Thursdays, noon to 8 p.m.; Fridays/Saturdays, 9 a.m. to 8 p.m.
•Hermiston Community Center, 415 S. Highway 395
\$30-\$80/depending on size/type. Douglas, grand and noble. Last year, the group sold out within two weeks (541-567-6728)
Stanfield
•Daily; 6 a.m. to 9 p.m.
•Main Street Market, 225 S. Main St., Stanfield
\$25. All proceeds distributed to community projects (541-449-3244).

tree lot. They will receive a donation of 20 percent of sales.

"Our goal is to help the teams earn a little money and to teach them about responsibility and giving back," Keith said.

A gregarious youth sports coach, Payan was thrilled with selling a 10-foot grand

fir to a customer Saturday evening. The Hermiston family was buying a fresh tree for the first time.

"That was cool," Payan said. "They were really excited to find such a big and beautiful tree."

For more information, call 541-922-1750 or search Facebook.

BRIEFS

Elks lodge hosts memorial service

Music by the Coffey Family is featured during a holiday memorial gathering at the Hermiston Elks Lodge. The public is invited to the free service Sunday at 10 a.m. at the lodge, 480 E. Main St., Hermiston. People are encouraged to enjoy brunch at 11 a.m. The meal costs \$8 per person.

For information, call Jim Voss at 541-571-5116 or the lodge at 541-567-6923.

Special Olympics gears up for winter

The Special Olympics winter sports season is just around the corner.

The local program offers basketball and powerlifting, which offers training and competitions for youths and adults with intellectual disabilities. There is no cost for athletes to participate.

People can register Monday, Dec. 3 from 5-6 p.m. at The Arc Building, 215 W. Orchard Ave., Hermiston. For more information about Hermiston/Pendleton Special Olympics Local Program #510, call Angela Schneider at 541-314-0166.

Library friends sets annual meeting

The annual meeting of the Friends of the Hermiston Public Library will include an awards presentation for the "friend" and volunteer

of the year. In addition, they will elect new officers and discuss results of the recent book sale. The meeting is Wednesday, Nov. 28 from 6-7 p.m. at the library, 235 E. Gladys Ave., Hermiston. The public is welcome to attend and learn more about the organization.

For information, call the library at 541-567-2882.

Run Rudolph, run!

A costume-themed fun run is set to provide nonperishable food donations for the Umatilla Volunteer Firefighters Association's annual Christmas basket program.

In its second year, the Rudolph Fun Run is coordinated by the Umatilla High School National Honor Society. The 5K event is Saturday, Dec. 8 from 9-10 a.m. at the McNary Fire Station, 305 Willamette Ave, Umatilla. The entry is five non-perishable food items. Participants will receive water and hot chocolate at the end of the race. People are encouraged to come out and share the holiday spirit for those less fortunate in the community.

For more information, search Facebook or call NHS advisor Nancy Swarat at 541-922-6568.

Community choir warms up season

Area adults and youths have been warming up their voices for Hermiston's annual holiday concert.

"Peace and Good Will,"

the Hermiston Community Christmas Concert, is Friday, Dec. 7 at 7 p.m. at Hermiston High School, 600 S. First St. Admission is free. However, representatives from Eastern Oregon Mission will be on hand to accept donations for the nonprofit.

The community choir program is coordinated by Hermiston Parks & Recreation. For more information, call 541-667-5018.

Agape House giving

Eastern Oregon Mission, the parent organization of Agape House and Martha's House, is excited about additional ways to give as the holidays approach — through BottleDrop Give and the Amazon Smile Foundation.

A recyclable bottle can drive running through Dec. 5 will provide an extra boost to the nonprofit organization. BottleDrop Give will provide a percentage match depending on the amount of funds raised. Dave Hughes, Eastern Oregon Mission

executive director, said their goal is to recycle \$1,000 worth of cans and bottles. If that amount is met, they will receive a 30 percent match through the program.

For the special BottleDrop Give campaign, cans and bottles need to be dropped off by Wednesday, Dec. 5 at Agape House, 500 Harper Road, Hermiston. Also, people can contact Hughes to make arrangements for pick-up service for large amounts.

While doing online shopping at Amazon, people are encouraged to go through smile.amazon.com. Customers will find the same products, prices and shopping features as the regular Amazon shopping site, but the foundation will donate .5 percent of the purchase price of eligible purchases to the nonprofit chosen. When logged into smile.amazon.com, be sure to select "Eastern Oregon Mission" before you begin shopping.

For more information about the BottleGive program call Hughes at 541-567-8774.

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