

# Hermiston Herald

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**INSIDE**

**DELAYED**

The I-82 bridge heading from Washington into Umatilla was supposed to re-open this month but will not open until spring or summer of 2019.

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**GIVING TREE**

Local nonprofits offer opportunities to purchase gifts for seniors, children and animals with giving trees around town.

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**SAFE DRIVE**

A driver's ed instructor, towing company and others offer tips for safe winter driving.

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**BY THE WAY**

**Hermiston Herald website gets new look**

If you visited the *Hermiston Herald* website in the past week, you may have noticed it has a new look.

The new and improved website is part of a company-wide upgrade by **EO Media Group**. It includes features previously available on our website — including an archive dating back to 2001 — but will also allow us to begin offering a better experience through new features such as embedded Google maps, keyword tags, user reactions to stories and the ability for readers to follow specific writers or get notifications when articles containing certain keywords are published.

We hope you enjoy the new design of [www.hermistonherald.com](http://www.hermistonherald.com). Feel free to give feedback or report problems to [editor@hermistonherald.com](mailto:editor@hermistonherald.com).

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The **U.S. Postal Service** suspended operations Wednesday in order to mark the passing of former president **George H.W. Bush**. Mail that would have been delivered Wednesday — including

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## LIGHTING UP THE HOLIDAYS



By **JADE MCDOWELL**  
STAFF WRITER

Hermiston will celebrate the holiday season Thursday with a tree-lighting ceremony downtown.

The 40-foot fir tree decked out for this year's celebration served as a Christmas tree for the Barron family in the 1960s.

Jason Barron, the city's

new parks manager, said after Christmas was over that year his mother, Shirley, and older brother, Greg, planted the tree in their yard. He remembers the family putting lights on the tree each year until it got too big to reach the top with a ladder. More recently, the tree has gotten too close to power lines and its roots

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STAFF PHOTO BY JADE MCDOWELL

**TOP:** Umatilla Electric Cooperative employees lower a giant Christmas tree into a special hole built into the new festival street in preparation for a tree-lighting ceremony Thursday. **BOTTOM:** Five thousand LED Christmas lights illuminate a tree at Hermiston's 2016 tree-lighting celebration (FILE PHOTO).

## Farm Fair was Hamm's last as experiment station director

By **JAYATI RAMAKRISHNAN**  
STAFF WRITER

On the opening day of the Hermiston Farm Fair, the conference room at the Eastern Oregon Trade and Event Center was packed with growers and scientists listening to Phil Hamm talk about potatoes.

Hamm's Nov. 28 presentation, "What I Would Do to Manage Diseases if I was a Potato Grower," was his last as an Oregon State University employee. The longtime plant pathologist and professor will retire in summer of 2019 after a nearly 30-year career with the college, and a nearly 45-year career studying plant diseases.

He kept the crowd involved during the half-hour seminar, covering the basics of four common potato

diseases and how to avoid them.

"Potato Virus Y does two things," he said, letting his professional side come out. "Someone tell me."

He noted that the virus, which reduces tuber yield and quality, is difficult to control, and is vectored — or spread — by aphids as well as seed-borne. His recommendation to growers: Produce PVY-free seed, and make sure the seed has been tested thoroughly.

After the presentation, Hamm tried to leave but got sidetracked about a dozen times in conversations with people who have known and worked with him for years.

"That's the sad part — this is what I'm going to miss when I finally retire," he said. "I had several growers



STAFF PHOTO BY KATHY ANEY

**Phil Hamm**, director of the Hermiston Agricultural Research & Extension Center, speaks about potatoes on Nov. 28 at the Hermiston Farm Fair. Hamm will retire this summer.

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