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INSIDE

PEDRO LEAVES

Hermiston Chamber of Commerce president Debbie Pedro is stepping down after more than 18 years on the job.

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SANTA CLAUS

Santa was one of the main attractions at Hermiston's tree-lighting ceremony Thursday.

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SWEET SOUND

Les McMasters makes hand-crafted guitars in his Hermiston shop.

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BY THE WAY

Rules changed for lost property

Hermiston residents who find lost property might get to keep it under new rules passed by the Hermiston city council on Monday.

Previously, if someone found lost property and turned it into the **Hermiston Police Department** they forfeited all stake in it. Under the ordinance amendment passed Monday, city code would follow state law, which dictates that if a person finds lost money or goods and reports it to the city or police, the property is theirs to keep legally if the owner is not found within three months. For goods or money over \$250, the finder must publish a notice in the local newspaper once a week for two consecutive weeks if they want to be allowed to keep the lost property.

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The deadline is fast approaching to enroll in health insurance through the federal exchange.

People who don't get insurance through an employer, the **Oregon Health Plan** or **Medicare** have until Saturday to enroll in a plan or

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Santa's helpers



Mail carrier Diane Barton delivers mail to a cluster of mailboxes Thursday on Southeast Cassens Court in Hermiston.

Staff photo by E.J. Harris/East Oregonian

By JADE MCDOWELL
Staff Writer

They may not have elves or flying reindeer to help them out, but the nation's mail carriers still manage to deliver Christmas presents to millions of homes each year.

The U.S. Postal Service expects to deliver a total of 15 billion letters and 900 million packages during the holiday season, defined as Thanksgiving to New Year's Day.

Diane Barton, who delivers mail in Hermiston, is doing her part. Thursday afternoon she was winding through a set of cul-de-sacs on the east side of town, dispersing a truckload of boxes and envelopes. Mail carriers throughout the nation were delivering two days worth of mail Thursday after postal services were suspended for a day to honor former president George H.W. Bush.

Barton said the holiday season means longer hours and more challenging deliveries, but it's also fun to see how excited people are to see her this time of year, especially children.

"The volume of packages, of course, changes tremendously," she said.



USPS carrier Diane Barton grabs a bin of parcels while delivering the mail on her route Thursday in Hermiston.

Staff photos by E.J. Harris/East Oregonian

Packages take longer to deliver than letters. They must be scanned with a hand-held device so that patrons who are tracking the package know it has arrived. Some small packages will fit in a mail-

box, but in other cases the carrier must get out of their truck and walk up to the front door. Sometimes a signature is required, or the home's resident prefers the package is put someplace less con-

spicuous than the porch.
Barton said she often can't fit all of the packages for her route into her truck this time of year so

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Nonprofits put donated items to work

By JAYATI RAMAKRISHNAN
Staff Writer

As Christmas draws near, shoppers may turn to thrift stores to purchase gifts with a low price tag.

For many local organizations, the money earned from those sales is going directly back into the services those groups provide. For others, the flow of money is slightly more complicated.

The size of the organization dictates how the money is used, as does the nature of the group itself.

For Hermiston-based organizations like Agape House, the Eastern Oregon Humane Society and Divine Blessings Thrift Shop, all the money stays local. For a national organiza-

tion like Goodwill, some of the funds go into hyper-local endeavors, but money from local sales also supplements regional services.

Goodwill operates by territory — Hermiston's is part of the Goodwill Industries of the Columbia, which includes 13 counties in Oregon and Washington.

About one percent of money from local sales goes to the national organization, said Ken Gosney, executive director of Goodwill of the Columbia. He said this year the Hermiston store earned about \$1.5 million from donation sales. The Hermiston store gets about 28,000 donations per year, counted by the number of people that



Jose Mendoza has worked at Goodwill in Hermiston for 10 years as a driver.

Staff photo by Jayati Ramakrishnan/East Oregonian

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