

Donate

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donate, not the number of items.

“There’s two sides of the house,” Gosney said. “The retail side, and the mission side. Our fundraising is really through donations and stores.”

He said because the store has the same expenses and challenges as a business like Walmart or Safeway, the retail side has to be profitable.

“But we take those profits, and if we’re doing a good job managing stores, we have more money to fund the mission side,” he said.

“Those services are cross-funded,” said operations director Jeff Maddison. “Sales from the Tri-Cities may fund work in Hermiston, and vice versa.”

The Hermiston store employs 23 people, which Gosney said translates to about \$900,000 annually in salaries and benefits. Utilities and upkeep for the store are funded through donation sales.

Other community events are also funded by store sales. The company provides job training and hiring events for community businesses like Lamb Weston and Mid-Columbia Bus Company.

“We have an employee connections center in Pasco,” said Joey Edminster, a community connection and marketing specialist for Goodwill. “That’s through money from donations.”

The job search center is free, and offers help with everything from job searches to writing a resume.

In 2019, Goodwill plans to expand the service with a mobile Employment Connection Center that will go to one of the eight stores in the region every day.

Dave Hughes, executive director of Agape House, said the organization takes in about \$700 a month from yard sales. Most furniture and electronic items are “you-name-the-price,” while clothing is priced at 5 items for \$1.

The nonprofit has a contract with a Seattle-based company, to whom they send surplus clothes. Hughes said they get about \$1,200 a year from that contract.



Staff photo by Jayati Ramakrishnan/East Oregonian
Jessica Araiza sorts donated items at Goodwill in Hermiston.

Hughes said he has no idea of the value of the donations that come in, but about 93 cents of every dollar they earn goes back into one of their programs. The Agape House offers several services, including collecting and delivering food donations, and the backpack program, which sends school children home with a full backpack of food for the weekend.

If someone is truly in need, Hughes said, they will give away clothing at no charge.

Agape House has four paid employees, all of whom work less than full-time. Hughes estimated that they have about 120 volunteers.

The Humane Society of Eastern Oregon Pet Rescue opened a thrift store about a year ago. Executive director Beau Putnam said the store’s revenue goes directly back into the shelter, funding utilities, cleaning supplies, blankets, and supplies for the animals. Some goes into spay and neuter refunds, and the shelter recently purchased a new washing machine and dryer.

Like Agape House, customers at the Pet Rescue thrift store are asked to pay what they can for items, including clothing, electronics and furniture.

Putnam said a common misunderstanding about nonprofits is that people think they don’t make any revenue, or don’t have to charge for anything.

“A nonprofit means all the money you make goes back into your business,” he said.

Occasionally, he said, the funds will be used outside the shelter. Last year they funded Thanksgiving dinner for two families that couldn’t pay for it themselves.

Putnam said the shelter has three employees — he is full-time, there are two part-time workers, and about 10 volunteers.

Though the thrift store has brought in some additional funds, the shelter has other revenue streams: they contract with the city of Hermiston and Morrow County for animal control services. Their largest source of revenue this year was from dog adoptions, a change Putnam attributed in part to the opening of the thrift store.

“We get a lot more foot traffic in here because of that,” he said.

Putnam said he didn’t have exact numbers with him, but he estimated that the thrift store had brought in about \$20,000 in the past year.

Desert Rose Ministries, a Hermiston church that provides meals and helps people with homelessness and drug rehabilitation, has had a thrift store for a year. Divine Blessings Thrift Shop is entirely volunteer-run, and all the funds from the shop go back into Desert Rose’s services.

“Our costs are somewhere around \$70,000 for rent for all our buildings,” he said.

Sandy Valette, manager of the thrift store, said money also goes into helping people who need drug rehabilitation treatment. Desert Rose volunteers will drive patients to treatment in Portland, Seattle or Yakima.

“It pays for gas to get them there, or giving out clothes to the homeless,” she said.

Desert Rose also donates clothing items to Domestic Violence Services, as well as people who need clothes for job interviews.

Helpers

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she either has to return to the post office and reload or have another employee help with deliveries. To accommodate the holiday rush, between Thanksgiving and New Year’s USPS hires extra employees, schedules its full-time employees for longer hours and offers Sunday deliveries in most major cities.

The internet has greatly changed the holiday delivery experience in the 18 years Barton has been delivering mail, she said. People do send fewer Christmas cards through the mail, but packages have increased dramatically.

“Ten years ago I had 10 to 15 (a day) and now there are hundreds,” she said.

According to information on the USPS website, Dec. 17-23 is usually their busiest delivery week. They recommend shipping USPS Ground Delivery packages by Dec. 14 for the best chance of having them arrive by Christmas, and sending priority and first-class mail by Dec. 20 at the latest.

One thing people can do to help, Barton said, is to make sure the area in front of their roadside mail box is clear of snow, garbage cans, cars and other obstructions so that carriers can pull up and reach their arm through the window instead of parking and getting out.

“That’s huge for us,” she said. “That little thing can cost me an hour or more a day sometimes.”

Barton said the salary and benefits package she gets through the U.S. Postal Service was “life-changing” for her family

after she switched from working two minimum-wage jobs.

She said she loves getting out and meeting people, and over a decade on the same route has become very familiar with her customers and their preferences. In some cases, she said, she is the only person an elderly homeowner will talk to all day. She even follows up when customers who are usually waiting eagerly for her don’t show up at the mailbox.

“It’s my watch. I feel it’s part of my duty to take care of people,” she said.

A changing organization

Changes will likely be coming to the U.S. Postal Service. The organization has been losing money for the past decade, and on Tuesday the Treasury Department released a report with recommendations to make it more sustainable.

The report states that online shopping has increased package volume but email has decreased letter volume, making the agency’s business model and rate structure outdated.

“Although the USPS must still serve all citizens and businesses in the country, its goal with respect to commercial mailers and shippers must be to optimize long-term revenue based on market principles, rather than to ensure access to a rate-regulated, uniform government service,” the report read.

Recommendations include exploring new sources of revenue, increasing the agency’s flexibility in pricing and looking for ways to reduce operating costs. The Treasury Department did not recommend privatizing the postal service.

BTW

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face a year without health insurance.

Visit www.oregonhealthcare.gov to browse plans and see how much financial assistance you qualify to receive, or call 1-855-268-3767 for assistance.

Local Special Olympic athletes recently celebrated the conclusion of the 2018 bowling season. More than 70 athletes, along with family members, supporters and coaches celebrated during a Nov. 26 event at The Arc Building in Hermiston.

It featured pulled pork sandwiches donated by Eastern Oregon Mobile Slaughter, which were prepared by Gigi’s BBQ

and served by **Gems and Gents** members. A flag ceremony was presented by a pair of **Veterans of Foreign Wars Post #4750** members, who were accompanied by two members of **Our Lady of Angels Knights of Columbus Council #3999**. The national anthem was sung by **Marti Plum**.

Medals and ribbons were provided in part by **R & R Engraving**. **Angela Schneider**, local program coordinator, announced the winners and members of the **Hermiston Police Department** presented them to athletes.

Also, it was announced that a recent bowl-a-thon fundraiser brought in \$5,000 for **Hermiston/Pendleton Special Olympics Local Program #510**.

Top bowlers included **Jillian Smalley** in first place, **David Andrews**, second, and **Angie Koester**, third.

The winter sports season begins in January. For more information, call Schneider at 541-314-0166.

Members of **Altrusa International of Hermiston** gathered Dec. 6 at The Arc Building to help serve as **Santa’s** elves. The service club provides gifts each year for the **Hermiston Police Christmas Express**.

More than two dozen Altrusans gathered around a table with the bounty that will surely bring smiles to the faces of local children. Gifts included everything from stuffed animals and games to dolls and toy trucks.



Senior Living

Our Senior Living guide is a quarterly resource for your community’s active older citizens. In this new publication are stories about travel, mental health, giving back to the community, financial planning, returning to the workforce and more.

AD DEADLINE: Dec. 14th • PUBLISH DATE: Dec. 26th
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