



Photo contributed by Rod Bragato

Youths and chaperones head to one of the destinations during the 2017 New Year's Eve Lock-In. This year's event begins and ends at Living Faith Church in Hermiston.

Youth event locks in New Year's fun

By TAMMY MALGESINI
COMMUNITY EDITOR

An epic New Year's Eve party is planned for area youths.

"This year is going to be hot," said David Gutierrez, youth pastor at Living Faith Church. "I don't want that stigma that church is boring."

The New Year's Eve Lock-In is Monday, Dec. 31 beginning at 7 p.m. at Living Faith, 1611 Diagonal Blvd., Hermiston. While the event begins and ends at Living Faith, church buses will transport youths and chaperones to other destinations, including Knocker-Ball at the Hermiston Christian Center and laser tag at Campus Life. Other activities available include a Fortnite dance battle, board games, pool, ping pong, basketball, a movie, pizza and much more.

The entourage will return to Living Faith at midnight to ring in the New Year with live music and an inspirational message. The event ends Tuesday, Jan. 1 at 1:30 a.m.

Open to youths ages 12-18, the auxiliary activities will be split with mid-

dle school students at one destination while high school students will be at the other. The cost is \$15 per person, which is payable at the door.

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David Gutierrez, youth pastor at Living Faith Church

Initially organized by Living Faith, the idea behind the New Year's Eve Lock-In was to provide a fun and safe night for youths, Gutierrez said. In the fall of 2015 when he started at Living Faith, several other youth leadership positions were filled in the area. Rather than being exclusive and focusing on activities for just their own groups, Gutierrez said the leaders decided to work together collaboratively.

"It kind of exploded from there," he said. "Last year, 230 students attended. It was more than we were expecting."

Born and raised in Hermiston, Gutierrez said as a teen he started making some bad choices. When he was 16, he moved to Salem — and later Centralia, Washington — when an aunt and uncle took him in. They were pastors and introduced Gutierrez to Christ.

Around the age of 24, Gutierrez decided to go into youth ministry. With a naturally cheery and upbeat personality, coupled with high energy and social awkwardness at times, he said it seemed to be the perfect combination.

"I was able to get my energy out and connect with teens on a personal level," he said. "And they were helping me, too."

As far as deciding the type of activities for the lock-in, Gutierrez takes the pulse of current trends — talking to teens and other group leaders.

"I purposely try to follow trends to see what is hot or not," he said. "I want to do things that attract teens. I don't want a boring party."

Murder mystery dinner at Agape House

By TAMMY MALGESINI
COMMUNITY EDITOR

Murder and mayhem ensues as someone ends up dead in Deadwood.

The biggest deal in town for quite some time, as a Texas hold 'em tournament draws in people from near and far. Presented by Agape House, the murder mystery dinner theater fundraiser will leave you dying for more.

Simply Catering is serving up a Wild West meal with a choice of barbecue pork loin or beef tri-tip. The menu also includes red potato salad or broccoli salad, baked beans and rolls. And, don't forget to leave room for dessert — it's to die for.

"Murder at the Deadwood Saloon" is Monday, Dec. 31 from 6-9 p.m. at Agape House, 500 Harper Road, Hermiston. Tickets are \$35 each.

Although not required, Agape House executive director Dave Hughes encourages people to dust off their Stetson hats, starch their Wrangler jeans and pull on pair of cowboy boots.

"It's always a lot of fun when everyone gets into it," Hughes said.

A cast of unsavory characters will leave the audience with lots of questions. As everyone gathers for a party to celebrate the tournament's success and to award the prize money, someone meets their demise.

With a handful of locals with possible axes to grind, or high stakes gamblers sore about losing, it's anyone's guess as far as "who dunnit."

Hughes said the murder mystery fundraisers are always a lot of fun. And, the Western-themed ones, he said, seem to appeal to

a lot of people.

"I enjoy watching the guests interact with the characters," Hughes said. "It's so interesting to see how they react — or should I say suspect?"

In addition to providing financial support for Agape House, Hughes said, the fundraiser offers a fun evening for people in the community. Also, he said it's being held early enough that afterwards people can head to the Hermiston New Year's Eve Bash, which starts at 9 p.m. on the festival street area.

Eastern Oregon Mission, the parent organization for Agape House and Martha's House provides assistance to people in need. For more information, to purchase an event ticket or learn ways to support Agape House, call Hughes at 541-567-8774 or 541-571-7293.

BRIEFS

Recreation department presents family night

While company is in town for the holiday season, Hermiston Parks & Recreation invites them to a family event.

Activities include bounce houses, a bungee run, a velcro wall, Jacob's ladder, corn hole, air hockey, ping pong and more. Also, concessions will be available for cash purchase.

Family Friday Night is Friday, Dec. 28 from 5:30-7:30 p.m. at the Hermiston Community Center, 415 S. Highway 395. The cost is \$15 for ages 16 and older, \$10 for ages 2-15 or \$30 for a family of four (additional kids are \$8 each). Children must be accompanied by a guardian.

Space is limited, so those planning to

attend are encouraged to reserve a spot. For more information, call 541-667-5018.

IMAC cooks up breakfast fundraiser

A hearty breakfast is featured during a fundraiser for the Irrigon Multicultural Arts Center.

The meal is Saturday, Dec. 29 from 7:30-10:30 a.m. at Stokes Landing Senior Center, 150 Columbia Lane, Irrigon. The cost is \$4.50 per person.

The nonprofit group is interested in preserving Irrigon's 1921 school building and developing a regional arts venue. For more information, call Peggy Price at 541-567-3806.

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