



Maria Castillo, Elida Gutierrez and Aracely Urenda, all employees of Columbia Bank in Hermiston, get ready to eat a taco Monday at Nookie's Restaurant/Hermiston Brewing Co.

**TACOS**

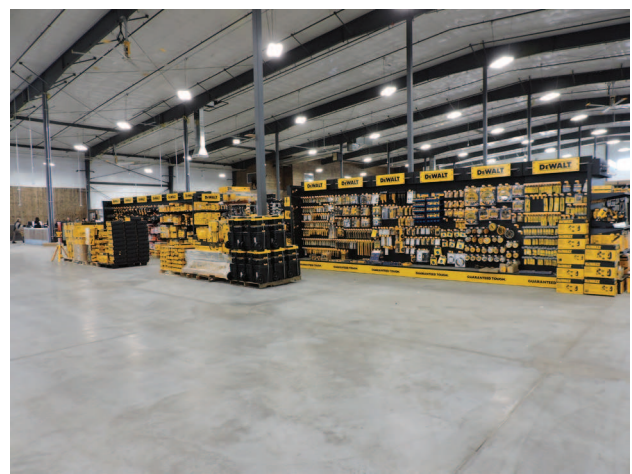
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stays locally. "The United Way is a good thing," Gutierrez said. "People don't always realize it, but they help a lot of people in our community." Nearly a dozen people gathered around a set of tables Monday night at Nookie's Restaurant/Hermiston Brewing Co. Server Sean Altizer didn't need to write down the order — a round of tacos. The prime rib taco came with a special sauce and pico de gallo. "This is something we made for this event," Altizer said. "We are talking about adding it to the menu."

As soon as her taco was delivered, Stanley pulled out her cell phone to take a photo and make a Facebook post — tagging both the restaurant and United Way. She ranks tacos as one of her favorite foods — especially when they're made with homemade tortillas. Bettencourt said participating in Tastiest Taco provides an incentive for people to eat at restaurants they've never gone to before. Several of the Columbia Bank employees agreed, saying they have already discovered new places to eat as part of their own personal taco journey. Maria Castillo, a drive-up teller, said she loves tacos. However, prior to buying

a taco stamp book, she had only eaten at four of the 10 participating vendors. "It just gives me another reason to eat tacos. I didn't realize how many Mexican restaurants are in town," Castillo said. "I'm excited to try them out." The 10 participating vendors include six locations in Hermiston and one each in Irrigon, Pendleton, Stanfield and Umatilla. Several restaurants that were too late to get in on this year's Tastiest Tacos are still a part of the fundraiser. Several have donated gift certificates. Harrington said people who turn in completed stamp books will be entered into a drawing for a chance

to win. Harrington said the fundraiser comes at a critical time for the United Way. Members of the Community Investment Committees are currently involved with the funding allocation process. With a shortage of funds, Harrington is hopeful enough additional money will be raised to help support agencies in need. Tastiest Taco stamp books can still be obtained via [www.umatillamorrow-unitedway.org](http://www.umatillamorrow-unitedway.org), Columbia Bank branches in Hermiston (1033 S. Highway 395) or Pendleton (2101 S.W. Court Place), or by calling Harrington at 541-314-5888.



Staff photo by Jade McDowell

A display of DeWalt tools sits on the floor of Ranch & Home during its soft opening Friday.

**OPENING**

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Jerry and Cheryl Ennis were browsing the weed-killer selection Friday morning as customers trickled in. They said they had recently returned to Hermiston after a stint living elsewhere and they were excited to see the store open. "It's great," Jerry said. "We're just checking out prices. Maybe this will help with the competition in town." He said the store had "quite an inventory" available for the soft opening. George and Laura Koelman of Pendleton drove over to check out the selection of rubs for a barbecue they are hosting over the weekend. "This is a big store,"

Laura said. George said he liked that Ranch & Home has "everything" in one store. The city of Hermiston had originally offered the company an incentive package of reimbursements worth about \$107,800 if it opened by the end of 2017, but the store was unable to meet the deadline even after it was extended to June 2018. The 18-acre property still has room on it for more development, and the company has hoped to recruit a grocery store or other developer for the site. Ranch & Home is still hiring. Hunsaker said people can pick up applications inside the store or online. The store was closed for Easter Sunday, but will be open seven days a week from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m.

**Merkley to hold town hall Thursday**

As a part of his annual town hall tours tour of every county in Oregon, U.S. Sen. Jeff Merkley will be holding a town hall Thursday at 5 p.m. at the Pendleton Early Learning Center.

The Pendleton Early Learning Center is at 455 S.W. 13th St. His stop in Pendleton is a part of a two-day swing through Eastern Oregon. He will hold town halls in Ontario and Baker City on Wednesday and follow it up on Thursday with appearances in La Grande, Enterprise, and Pendleton.

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**10K 5K 1M**

**Run for Ribbons**

TRI-CITIES CANCER CENTER

**SATURDAY May 11th, 2019**

**What will you run for?**

Join the Tri-Cities Cancer Center Foundation in support of local cancer patients and their families. Run for Ribbons is a 10k, 5k and 1mile run/walk community event to raise awareness and promote prevention of all forms of cancers. All funds raised from this event stay LOCAL.

Participants can purchase an event t-shirt featuring a blank ribbon. It's the Run for Ribbons tradition to decorate it, customize it, use it to honor a memory, celebrate survival, or to simply encourage hope.

**\$25 Adults / \$15 Youth / \$10 for t-shirt**  
(Registration fee does not include t-shirt)

10k, 5k and 1mile Run - Walk  
Howard Amon Park in Richland

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RibbonFest / Check In 8:30 am  
Run - Walk Begins 10:00 am

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Register online: [www.runforribbons.org](http://www.runforribbons.org)  
Register by phone: 509.737.3413