

# High-speed pursuits lead to arrests

By PHIL WRIGHT  
STAFF WRITER



Kelly Abell

Jeffrey Alan Kelly of Irri-  
gon is in jail on charges of  
sexual abuse after leading  
law enforcement on a chase.

Morrow County District  
Attorney Justin Nelson said  
a grand jury indicted Kelly  
in secret. According to court  
documents, the state accused  
Kelly, 41, of sexually assault-  
ing a girl younger than 14 in  
December 2018. He pleaded  
not guilty Tuesday to one  
count of second-degree sod-  
omy and two of first-degree  
sexual abuse.

Circuit Judge Daniel Hill  
set bail for Kelly at \$275,000.  
He remains in the Umatilla  
County Jail.

The Morrow County  
Sheriff's Office arrested  
Kelly on a warrant for the  
charges Monday night, but  
not before he tried to get  
away.

Patrol Sgt. Nathen Braun  
attempted a traffic stop on  
Kelly "after some strategic  
planning and organization,"  
according to a news release  
from the sheriff's office.

Kelly and a passenger,  
however, took off in a 2007  
silver Chevrolet Suburban  
down Highway 730.

Sheriff Ken Matlack,  
patrol Sgt. Todd Siex and  
three deputies worked to  
close off escape routes, and  
Kelly turned south on Divi-  
sion Lane toward Depot  
Lane and entered a cornfield  
and a hemp field.

Several members of sher-  
iff's office followed. Kelly  
stuck the Suburban in sage-  
brush, then he and the passen-  
ger bolted on foot. The sher-  
iff's office caught the pair  
after about three minutes.

One sheriff's vehicle also  
became stuck in the rough  
terrain and later removed,  
along with the Suburban.  
The sheriff's office later  
released the passenger, Lucia  
Madrigal, 31, of Boardman,  
without charges.

Kelly will face charges  
related to the chase, includ-  
ing felony eluding, criminal  
mischief and reckless endan-

gering. Nelson said his office  
could charge Kelly with  
failure to register as a sex  
offender.

The state in 2009 charged  
Kelly with first-degree rape,  
sexual abuse and more. He  
pleaded no contest to one  
count of first-degree sexual  
abuse and served about six  
years in prison.

Kelly's next hearing  
is Aug. 22 for a pre-trial  
conference.

The Umatilla County  
Sheriff's Office called off a  
high-speed pursuit when it  
became too dangerous.

Umatilla County sheriff's  
Lt. Sterrin Holcomb said  
Stanfield police Saturday at  
about 9:30 p.m. tried to stop  
a black Acura Integra for  
speeding on Highway 395.

"It was going at speeds  
over 100 mph," she said.

The driver got away, and  
soon a sheriff's deputy spot-  
ted the car on East Highland  
Extension, Hermiston. The  
Acura wound up to 86 mph,  
she said, and swerved into  
oncoming traffic. The sher-  
iff's office ended the chase  
due to safety concerns.

But the sheriff's office  
caught the suspect early Sun-  
day, Sterrin said, when a de-  
puty responded to a report of  
a suspicious vehicle on the  
31000 block of Joy Lane,  
Hermiston. The deputy  
found the Acura with a front  
plate matching the car from  
the earlier chases. The de-  
puty arrested Adam Fredrick  
Abell, 31, of Hermiston, on  
10 charges, including felony  
eluding, reckless endanger-  
ing and felony methamphet-  
amine possession. He, too, is  
in the county jail.

Abell also has a fel-  
ony weapons case pending  
in Morrow County Circuit  
Court. He bailed out of jail  
on that case Thursday.



Staff photo by Jessica Pollard

Alumni from the Hermiston High School Class of 1999 assemble a Buddy Bench at Rocky Heights Elementary School.

# Class of 1999 helps bring Buddy Benches to Hermiston schools

By JESSICA POLLARD  
STAFF WRITER

When the recess bells  
ring later this month, ele-  
mentary school students  
will have a place to go if  
they find themselves with-  
out a playmate, thanks  
to the installation of 10  
benches in Hermiston  
School District's elemen-  
tary school playgrounds.

These aren't just ordi-  
nary benches. They're  
Buddy Benches — or  
"friendship benches" —  
which are meant to be a  
safe space for students to  
sit when they're lonely or  
having a bad day. Other  
students can visit the bench  
and invite kids to chat and

play.  
"The Buddy Benches  
create a beautiful opportu-  
nity for students to be kind,  
to see someone who doesn't  
have a friend to play with,  
who may be having a bad  
day," said Melissa Purs-  
well, who teaches sixth  
grade at Armand Larive  
Middle School.

Purswell, who also heads  
Armand Larive's Kindness  
Club, secured grant fund-  
ing from the Hermiston  
Education Foundation for  
Buddy Benches last year.

After meeting with prin-  
cipals at the elementary  
schools, Purswell said it  
was decided that each of  
the five schools should  
have two benches — one

for their smaller and one  
for their main playground.  
Purswell found herself five  
benches short of this goal.

That's when members  
of the Hermiston High  
School class of 1999, who  
celebrated their 20-year  
reunion last weekend,  
stepped in.

Cody Hawes, a 1999  
alumnus who now lives in  
Utah, caught wind of Purs-  
well's plan to get Buddy  
Benches to Hermiston's  
schools.

"We have Buddy  
Benches in Utah, and  
they're really helpful for  
limiting bullying," Hawes  
said.

He, in partnership with  
other class of 1999 alumni,

started a GoFundMe cam-  
paign, which raised more  
than \$1,200 in three days.

Most of the donations,  
Hawes said, came from the  
group of former Hermiston  
High School graduates.

A crew of seven alumni,  
along with Purswell and her  
son, installed the benches  
Saturday. Purswell said  
Armand Larive's Kind-  
ness Club will be making  
an informational video for  
students about how to use  
them.

"It's our job as adults  
to not only create oppor-  
tunities for our students to  
practice kindness in action  
but to model it. I can't wait  
for the students to use these  
benches," she said.

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