

FAREWELL

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of grandchildren on excursions to Dairy Queen, where Bob said he would often confound the staff by ordering a maraschino cherry marshmallow milkshake in his signature mumble.

He attended sporting events for all 21 grandchildren and graduations for all 20 who have graduated so far, and taught them to hunt and fish. He also put them to work at a young age in the sheds, packing watermelons for customers.

“He taught them how to count change, to work hard,” Bob said.

Community members reacted with sadness to news of Skip Walchli’s passing. Mayor David Drotzmann recognized Walchli during a city council meeting on Monday night, call-



Skip and Sherry Walchli

Contributed photo by the Walchli family

ing the farmer a pioneer who helped put Hermiston on the map. Nearly 300 people expressed their condolences on the Walchli Farms Facebook page, calling the Walchli family patriarch a good man with a heart of gold.

A celebration of life

will be held on Sunday at the family farm, 32697 E. Loop Road, at precisely 12:26 p.m., immediately followed by a luncheon. At 4 p.m. all present are invited to take take part in the procession forming at the farm and proceeding to a burial at Hermiston Cemetery.

TEST

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their status quo.

At the Hermiston School District, assessment averages for the 2018-2019 school year are the same as the year prior, except for a less than 1% increase in mathematics scores.

“There weren’t really any surprises,” said Hermiston School District Assistant Superintendent Bryn Browning.

This year, 56.2% of all Hermiston students met proficiency standards in their grade level for English language arts, falling below the 59.7% state average. More than 44% met proficiency in mathematics, rising above the state’s 39.4% average.

While *The Oregonian* reported Thursday that low participation rates in the testing among high

schoolers made for unreliable state results, student participation in the assessments neared 100% across all demographics in Hermiston.

“We have a few parents who exercise the right to not have their student take the assessments,” Browning said.

Across different grade levels, the only places where school district performance dropped below the state average involved fourth-grade English language arts, which at 45% proficiency was four points below the state’s average and 11th-grade mathematics, which showed 30% proficiency for the district and 32% statewide.

“We put a lot of effort into fourth grade last year,” Browning said. “But there were content changes in the assessment that we weren’t aware of.”

The district stated in a recent press release that students and their families will have access to their individual student reports later this fall through PowerSchool, which will provide scores and highlight areas of strength and weakness for each student.

Browning urged parents in the district to take a look at the individual scores.

“It will be interesting to see how many parents use PowerSchool,” Browning said. “Just take the time and go through the individual information. It can lend itself to some good conversation with students.”

She said that the assessment results provide a broader look at student success in the district, and that when Oregon Statewide Report Cards come out later this year, the district will be able to analyze student performance more deeply.

Murdock sees progress but still more room for improvement on southern border visit

By **BEN LONERGAN**
STAFF WRITER

Last week, Umatilla County Commissioner George Murdock joined roughly a dozen members of the National Association of Counties’ Immigration Reform Task Force on a visit to the United States’ southern border.

The trip allowed Murdock and several others to see inside of U.S. Border Patrol facilities in El Paso, Texas, as well as a refugee center in Juarez, Mexico, just across the border. Murdock, who returned last Thursday, spoke of the visit as a transformative experience, saying that the visit changed his perceptions of the border crisis for the better.

“If 50 people suddenly showed up at your front door and you had to take care of them, it would be overwhelming and would certainly take time to make necessary adjustments,” said Murdock. “That was the situation in March. It is not the situation six months later.”

On his first day in El Paso, Murdock recalls watching a pair of families give themselves up to U.S. Customs and Border Patrol agents after crossing the Rio Grande River from Mexico into the United States.



HH file photo

Umatilla County Commissioner George Murdock recently returned from a visit to the United States’ southern border alongside fellow members of the National Association of Counties.

“Forty-five minutes later we encountered the Honduran mother and her three children at a processing center,” Murdock said. “As we passed, they smiled and waved.”

Murdock said that his perceptions going into the week aligned predominantly with those he had seen in the news last March —

highly publicized scenes of terrible conditions and disorganization. Six months later, Murdock says that the facility they visited seemed much more organized; those seeking asylum spent no more than 30 to 36 hours in a holding facility before being turned back to Mexico to await an appearance before a U.S. judge who would determine the result of their request for asylum.

During their visit, the task force members encountered a group of unaccompanied children detained at the Border Patrol station at Del Norte crossing. According to Murdock, the children, ages 3 to 16, slept on portable beds and some watched cartoons as agents cared for them. The ability to provide food and clothing to detained youth marks a substantial improvement to the conditions reported months earlier.

“There is still trauma that people are experiencing,” said Murdock. “But that trauma is not a result of the conditions of the facilities.”

Following a tour of the U.S. facility, Murdock and his fellow visitors crossed the border to visit the Leona Vicario Federal Refugee Center in Ciudad Juarez, Mexico. The center, a former concert hall that is capable of housing 1,700 people, housed approximately 600 people at the time of the

commissioner’s visit. The difficulty, Murdock said, is that Ciudad Juarez is a very poor city where the high numbers of refugees are forced to vie for jobs and opportunities alongside the other 1.3 million residents of the city while awaiting a response from the U.S. government — a process that can take months.

“If it were left to me, I don’t know that I agree with putting them at that facility,” Murdock said. “I think I would feel more comfortable if the United States government were in charge of the center.”

Later this week members of the NACO task force will meet to further debrief the visit and discuss policy initiatives that they hope will aid in the issues faced at the border. Murdock, the lone Oregonian on the 54-member task force, said that he hopes to find solutions to improve the number of migrant workers in Umatilla County. Murdock explained that the county relies on between 8,000 and 10,000 Hispanic workers across multiple industries with the majority of those jobs being in agriculture.

“Unfortunately, immigration has become a political football of sorts,” said Murdock. “There are solutions to be had and it should be a nonpartisan issue, but one side is always afraid to compromise.”



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