

Celebrate Recovery provides outreach ministry, support

By **TAMMY MALGESINI**
COMMUNITY EDITOR

A faith-based support program launched a year ago at Stanfield Baptist Church is providing a valuable resource to people that may be struggling.

Celebrate Recovery is a Christ-centered 12-step program for people dealing with hurts, pain and a variety of addictions. It started with 43 attendees in 1991 at Saddleback Church in Lake Forest, California. Since then, more than 35,000 churches across the globe offer the ministry as a way to facilitate healing through the power of God.

Based on the 12 steps of Alcoholics Anonymous, Celebrate Recovery highlights a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Scott Zielke, associate pastor of congregational care at Stanfield Baptist, said the program provides a path to healing for everything from anger and money issues to sexual addictions and alcohol or drug abuse.

"There is no sin too big or too small," said Lisha Foster, who attends the group.

Rev. John Hurty, the church's senior pastor, said the decision to start a Celebrate Recovery group grew organically. After becoming aware of several people who were struggling with substance abuse issues, they wanted to find ways to minister to them.

Lacking specific tools, Hurty said they began to investigate ways to address the needs of those struggling. One of the focal points, he said, was how to really provide help. People in the community, he said, wrestle with how to respond when they see someone standing outside Walmart with a sign asking for money.

"They question, 'Am I helping or am I hurting?'" A ministry like Celebrate Recovery allows us to do something that's compassion based ... but it's not reactionary," Hurty said. "We are offering a ministry that can really help."

Hurty called Celebrate Recovery "a solid evangelical Bible-based program." It provides a framework to assist people in making sig-

nificant life changes. In addition, Zielke said it follows the example set by Jesus.

"We're in a society where we need to minister to hurting people," he said. "And I think that's what Jesus tells us to do — to reach out to those that are lost."

Foster, who was first introduced to Celebrate Recovery about 10 years ago, connected with the Stanfield group while at The Power House, a residential treatment center in Hermiston. After completing the program, Foster felt God leading her to remain in Eastern Oregon where she developed a solid support network.

"I learned it is a disease but after you have some clean time, it becomes a choice," she said. "And for me it all comes back to Jesus and my relationship with him."

Ken Freeman, too, feels the faith-based focus is important. The Hermiston man was ecstatic when he discovered the Stanfield program a couple of months ago.

After losing his son to drugs and suffering a stroke in 2010, Freeman felt his world crashing down on him.

"I lived in darkness way too long," he said. "I've always had the knowledge but not always the relationship."

Celebrate Recovery, Freeman said, not only provides him with a circle of support, but also allows him to be there for others.

"You don't feel so isolated," he said. "You will find a group of people who aren't here to judge — we all celebrate step-by-step victories."

Zielke stressed that the focus in Celebrate Recovery isn't on a person's particular struggle.

"It's not always what we're using but the why," Zielke said. "If they can figure out why they are doing what they are doing, why they are involved in a destructive behavior or relationship ... that's really the key for people."

Celebrate Recovery meets Monday from 6-8 p.m. at Stanfield Baptist Church, 310 E. Wheeler Ave. For more information, call Zielke at 541-571-6886 or 541-449-3313.

COLUMN

Time to pursue a new adventure

For the past 17 years, it has been my honor and privilege to lead Eastern Oregon Mission and its two outreaches Agape House and Martha's House. It is now time for me to turn over the reins and begin a new adventure.

As I reflect on the past years, I cannot help but see God's hand in all that has been accomplished. These accomplishments are not mine but His and would not have happened if you, our supporters, had not provided prayers, vision and funding.

I want to give a brief recap of the major highlights of what God and this community have accomplished during my tenure here. At my first board meeting, I was presented with a challenge: Bring to reality the vision of the board for a new facility. After three years of planning and fundraising, Agape House moved into its current home at 500 Harper Road, and was able to expand services to those in need in our community.

Also during this time, Agape House partnered with Blue Mountain Community College to open and operate a thrift store. We expanded our Harper Road location with the purchase



Hermiston Herald file photo

Agape House Executive Director Dave Hughes, left, and volunteer Pat Wood prepare a box of food to be given away in 2014.

of two additional acres to provide space for current and future programs. Seven years ago with the encouragement of the late mayor Bob Severson, our board developed Martha's House, a homeless family transitional program.

These are your accomplishments. I was only the catalyst. A very special thank you goes to my wife, Jodene, who is a prayer warrior, confidant and encourager.

So what is your role in the future of Eastern Oregon Mission? First and

foremost, your prayers are needed to ensure the organization continues to look to God for direction. Pray specifically that God provides a new executive director. Second, your financial support is needed to allow Eastern Oregon Mission to continue to provide services to our community.

So what is up for Dave and Jodene?

I had a plan to enjoy retirement here in the Hermiston area but God had a different plan. The one major lesson I learned

during my time here is to follow God's leading. We will be moving to Arizona and beginning a new journey.

In closing I would like to personally thank each and every one who has supported Eastern Oregon Mission during my time here. So please join me on Oct. 12 from 2-5 p.m. at First Christian Church and allow me to thank you in person. Cake and punch will be provided.

Dave Hughes is retiring as director of Eastern Oregon Mission after 17 years.

High schools ready to ramp up completion rates

By **JESSICA POLLARD**
STAFF WRITER

October isn't just for Halloween, it also means filing for financial aid.

The Free Application for Federal Student Aid is officially open for high school seniors considering going to college next year. And this time around, Oregon is hoping to boost completion numbers.

In August, the Oregon Department of Education and other partners rolled out a challenge for high schools to try and get as many students to fill out the FAFSA — or the ORSAA for undocumented or deferred action students — as possible. The goal is to increase completion rates by 5%.

"This can be a really stressful time for students

and their parents," said Liz Marvin, who is the College Bound coordinator at Hermiston High School. "I would recommend they have conversations about who is going to pay and how."

Hermiston High School and other area schools are participating in the statewide challenge.

A press release from the ODE states that Oregon's class of 2019 had a combined completion rate of almost 60%, which lags behind other states. The state education department hopes to bump that number to 64% of the class of 2020 filling out one of the forms.

According to data released in August from the National College Access Network, the number of completed FAFSA applications in Oregon for the

2019-20 school year was just over 26,000, up by 1.3% from the year prior.

The network also stated that seniors who fill out FAFSA are 84% more likely to immediately enter college. Completion of the form is also associated with a 100% increase in the amount of lowest income students who enroll into college out of high school.

Marvin said parents who worry they won't qualify for aid should fill out the application, which is often required for application to other scholarships.

At Hermiston High School, a financial aid day will be hosted on campus on Oct. 19. Marvin said the school usually has financial aid experts on hand and opens up computer labs so students will have support filling out

their aid applications.

"We would like everybody to do everything they can so they have options after high school. We're busy all throughout that day," she said.

Filling out the FAFSA application can be completed online at studentaid.gov/fafsa or via the myStudentAid app released last year. Students and their families will need Social Security numbers, recent tax returns, some basic financial information, as well as a list of schools they are interested in and other basic information.

Marvin said although she's not a fan of student loans, filling out the federal application is the only way to become eligible for many of them, if that's how a student has to pay for college.

School bond tax rate lower than expected

HERMISTON HERALD

Taxpayers in Hermiston got good news this week when the Umatilla County Assessor's Office reported that the school bond tax rate for Hermiston School District is going down to less than \$3.60 per \$1,000 of assessed value.

The school district had previously told taxpayers the bond was going to go down from \$4.09 to \$3.65 after the district paid off its pre-2008 bonds this summer. But the assessor's office determined that property values in Hermiston have risen faster than expected.

Property values within the boundaries of Hermiston School District grew by 4.66% in 2018, according to a news release by the school district.

The new rate will be reflected in property tax statements the county will begin sending out this week. The school district is going out for a bond during the November election, promising that the bond will not raise taxes above the new, lower rate. Hermiston's school bonds are expected to be paid off in 2029, but if the bond passes in November it will be paid off over a 25-year period.



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