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Area residents share stories of coping with a family member's serious mental illness.

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BY THE WAY

Hermiston officer an award finalist

Hermiston Police Department detective **Victor Gutierrez** was a finalist recently for the **United States Attorney General's Award for Distinguished Service in Policing**.

While he did not receive the award, chief **Jason Edmiston** wrote in a news release that it was a tremendous honor for Gutierrez to be a finalist — one of only 44 nationwide.

Gutierrez became a United States citizen in 1998 and a police officer in 1999. He served in the **Army National Guard** until being honorably discharged in 2001, and has been married for 25 years. Edmiston said Gutierrez works with "passion and compassion" in his job and is an asset to the department.

••• **Hermiston School District** is taking nominations for its sixth annual **Distinguished Alumnus** award.

Nominations must be submitted by Dec. 2. Candidates must be a graduate of Hermiston High School and have attended for at least two consecutive years before graduation, be a leader in their chosen field with "at least 10 years verifiable and successful professional experience," serve as a role model for youth, be recognized for significant career

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HERMISTON TO CONSIDER POSSIBLE SALE OF CENTER



Staff photo by Ben Lonergan

The city of Hermiston is making plans to sell the Hermiston Community Center to a private business.

By **JADE MCDOWELL**
NEWS EDITOR

A private business is interested in buying the Hermiston Community Center.

City of Hermiston staff said they are not at liberty to reveal the potential buyer's identity until a formal offer is made, but confirmed to the *Hermiston Herald* that they have been in discussion with a business that approached them about a possible sale of "city-owned downtown property, including the Hermiston Community Center."

The sale is far from a done deal — any offer from the developer would have to be voted on by the city council in an open meeting, advertised to the public in the newspaper and on the city's website. Options to mitigate the loss of the event space and for spending proceeds from the possible sale would be presented at that time, according to the city.

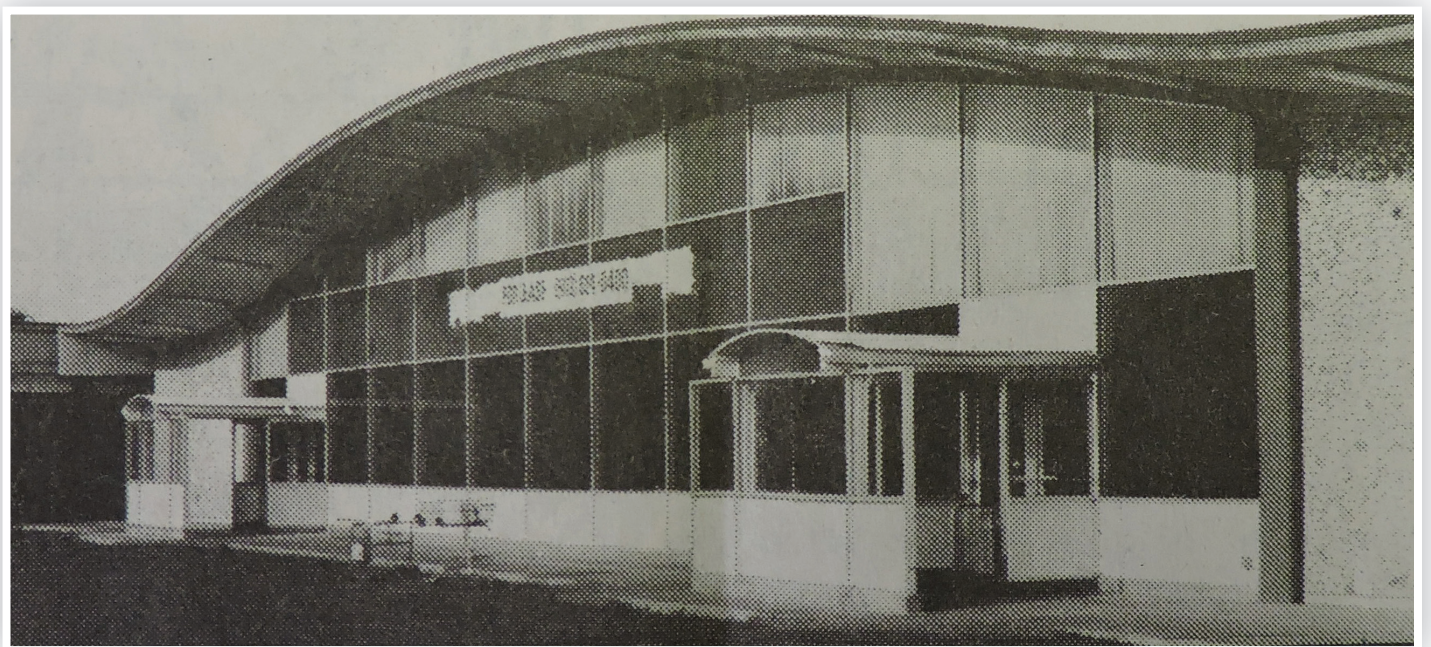
"Hermiston is a pro-business community and supports private sector growth and investment," City Manager Byron Smith said in a written statement. "As discussions develop, we will continue to do our due diligence as we balance

the community's needs with the opportunities this project may offer both our downtown and private sector."

Building history

The building at 415 S. Highway 395 was built in 1968, according to the *Hermiston Herald's* archives. It served as a Safeway for 10 years before the company moved to its current location just down the road. Afterward it cycled through vacancies and use as various retail stores, including Family Bargain Center.

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HH file photo

The Hermiston Community Center is pictured when the city of Hermiston purchased the building — a former Safeway — in 1994.

Local school districts get their report cards

A slight increase in the percentage of freshman students on track to graduate has administrators at Hermiston School District smiling, as the district meets the state average of 85%.

"We're excited about that. That's a predictor of overall graduation rate," superintendent Tricia Mooney said.

The Oregon Department of Education released its At-A-Glance Profiles for schools and districts Thursday — brief dashboard summaries of how schools are doing, with data on attendance, student achievement and whether students are on-track to graduate.

Mooney said the district's new graduation coach is likely in part responsible for the increase in freshmen on track to graduate. The

coach, Omar Medina, was hired in 2017. His role is to identify at-risk students in their early high school years and to provide extra support for them.

"For some of our kids, it's just about having a conversation regularly," Mooney said.

For the 2018-2019 school year, the average percentage of eighth-grade students meeting proficiency standards for math was 39%. The average percentage of third-graders meeting English Language arts proficiency standards was 47%.

Across the board, the district's At-A-Glance results level up with state averages. The district is 2% above the state average for English Language Arts proficiency at the



HH file photo

Hermiston High School graduates walk out on to the floor at the Toyota Center for their commencement ceremony on June 6, 2019, in Kennewick, Wash.

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