

**Center**

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In 1994, the city purchased the building and two small adjacent properties for a total of \$544,000, according to the *Herald's* reporting at the time. A special section advertising a grand opening celebration held Sept. 9, 1995, noted that a fundraising committee, led by Hermiston residents Bryan Wolfe

and Tim Mabry, raised \$665,000 in donations from nearly 500 private and corporate donors to pay for a remodel of the city-owned building. "Your city officials were willing to step forth and say, 'Take a look, friends of Hermiston, do we need such a facility?'" The answer was a resounding yes," the *Herald* quoted Wolfe as saying during his speech at the grand opening. For most of its exis-

tence, the center was run by the Greater Hermiston Area Chamber of Commerce, but in 2017 the city council voted unanimously to end its contract with the chamber and move the parks and recreation department into the building to run it instead. Citizens who showed up to oppose the move were told by city staff and city councilors that the center would still be available for community events under the new management.

During that time the city conducted a study of available event space in the area, noting that there were 689 total events held in the Hermiston Community Center in 2016, including chamber of commerce meetings. The city did not have an updated figure for 2018 immediately available. The report listed the city-owned Eastern Oregon Trade and Event Center, the National Guard Armory in

Hermiston and the Pendleton Convention Center as the other alternatives in the area for an indoor 300+ person event. Alternatives for smaller events included the Maxwell Siding Event Center, the Port of Morrow's offices in Boardman and the Oxford Suites in Hermiston. Assistant City Manager Mark Morgan reported to the council before their 2017 vote on the chamber contract that it took \$198,700 in gross expenses

to run the center, paid for by rental fees and transient room tax funds. He said that rental revenue for the community center had decreased since EOTEC had opened its event center in 2016. The community center is in the city's urban renewal district, meaning tax revenue generated from increases in the property's value would go toward the district for improvements to the downtown area.

**Report Cards**

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third-grade level, and is behind slightly on eighth-grade math at 35%. "That dip is frustrating to me," said Hermiston High School Principal Tom Spoo. Spoo said that as an administrator, he'd been helping the district focus in on math. He said that math improvement over the past four years had been significant. "We've spent many professional hours cross-walking, so that we're teaching what should be taught," he said. "We're working on teaching to the essential standards, and those standards are aligned with the Smarter Balanced tests." Math proficiency

dropped by 11% for eighth-grade migrant students and 9% for Hispanic and Latino students. Assistant Superintendent Bryn Browning said this might have to do with the influx the district has seen in recent arrivers, or students who are new to the United States. Some of those students, she said, don't yet speak English and their first language might be something other than Spanish. "A lot of what we're focusing on for those students isn't necessarily academics at this point," she said. "We know the data isn't going to give us the answers, but it helps us identify what questions we need to ask." She said the district uses the "accountability details" reports released by the ODE

to determine what changes might need to be made to structure or curriculum at the different schools. "It's only the second year we've had this kind of district report card," Browning said. "We'll be able to compare this year and last year so we can start tracking cohort trends going forward." Mooney said that for the district, tracking each cohort of students as they progress through the school system is more valuable than taking a peek at how a single grade of students do each year. "This is great information, (but) we look so much deeper at our kids. We look, not just at the subgroup, we try and track on a more individual basis," she said. The At-A-Glance report also showed a spike in graduation rates, but Mooney

said this number is from the 2017-18 school year. The 2018-19 rate will be out in January. "We're excited about that number, but it's not new," she said. Since the alternative program facility — the Innovative Learning Center — merged with the high school in 2016, the school has seen lower graduation rates. Before the merger, the school's independent graduation rate, not counting students at the alternative school, was at 87.6%. It's now at 74% with those students merged in. The Umatilla School District saw a rise in both math, from 5% to 16%, and English Language Arts proficiency, from 23% to 25%. "The only asterisk for us is that the Smarter Balanced

tests are not what we utilize," superintendent Heidi Sipe said. Sipe said she urges parents to instead examine students MAPS test scores, which is where the district focuses its curriculum. Umatilla High School's college-going rate for seniors increased by 9% during the 2018-2019 school year, but still falls 13 points below the state average. But Sipe doesn't see that as a bad thing. "Compared to similar schools, we have almost three times the going rate," she said. "We're really proud of how many kids we can get to go to college." At the Stanfield School District, different indicators rose up and below from the year past. Attendance rose 8% from last year to 84%,

surpassing the 83% state average. Math took a 27% plunge from last year, and English Language Arts Proficiency among third-graders went down 12 points to 30%. The 2017-2018 graduation levels also took a 10% hit from the year prior, while the amount of freshman students on-track to graduate increased to around 95%, surpassing the state average. Echo School District also saw a decrease in English Language Arts proficiency, by 11% from last year, but math rose by 14 points, to 47%, surpassing the state average. Students, parents, and others can search for more information about local schools and districts at <https://www.ode.state.or.us/data/reportcard/>.

**BTW**

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contributions, have a visible commitment to the well-being of the town, state, nation or world, possess exemplary character and be supported by strong references. The 2020 Distinguished Alumnus will be revealed at the **Hermiston Distinguished Citizens Banquet** held in February 2020. They will serve as a mentor for students throughout the school year and be a speaker at the high school's 2020

commencement. ... The **Hermiston Warming Station** recently expressed appreciation to **Wildhorse Foundation, Good Shepherd Health Care System, Walmart Distribution Center, Umatilla Electric Cooperative** and **Tillamook Creamery** for the generous grants received. HWS is 100% volunteer run and privately funded through donations and grants. Donations can be made to Hermiston Warming Station, P.O. Box 433,

Hermiston, OR 97838. The training schedule for the upcoming weeks at the warming station (1075 S. Highway 395) are: Friday, Oct. 25 from 9-10:30 a.m.; Saturday, Oct. 26 from 3-4:30 p.m.; Sunday, Oct. 27 from 5-6:30 p.m.; Tuesday, Oct. 29 from 6:30-8 p.m.; Saturday, Nov. 2 from 9-10:30 a.m.; Sunday, Nov. 3 from 3-4:30 p.m.; Monday, Nov. 4 from 6-7:30 p.m.; Thursday, Nov. 7 from 6:30-8 p.m. For other future dates, call 541-289-2150 or con-

tact **Adelaide Zumwalt** at [zumwalt.adelaide@gmail.com](mailto:zumwalt.adelaide@gmail.com) or search **Facebook**. ... Local CASA program manager **Jesus Rome** recently said the **Umatilla Morrow Child Welfare** system is in crisis. However, the agency recently received a boost — a \$50,000 Mentoring Grant from the **National Court Appointed Special Advocate/Guardian ad Litem Association for Children**. The money will be used to recruit, train and assign new volunteers to represent

the best interests of children who have experienced abuse or neglect. **Maureen McGrath, Umatilla Morrow County Head Start** executive director, said the agency currently has 204 children who need a volunteer to take an active role in their lives — but up to this point, they only have enough volunteers to serve 104 children. For more information, including how to become a CASA, contact Rome at 541-667-6091 or [jrome@umchs.org](mailto:jrome@umchs.org). ...

Thursday's menu for the **Harkenrider Senior Activity Center** is beef roast, baked potato, carrots and dessert. Friday is turkey sandwich, green salad and dessert. Monday is salad bar, dinner roll and dessert. Tuesday is spaghetti, garlic bread, green beans, tossed salad and birthday cake. Next Wednesday is macaroni and cheese, salad, bologna and dessert. — You can submit items for our weekly *By The Way* column by emailing your tips to [editor@hermistonherald.com](mailto:editor@hermistonherald.com).



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