

# Hermiston Herald

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 18, 2019

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\$1.50

## INSIDE

### SWEATER PARTY

Recording artist Cale Moon to perform at The Pheasant's ugly Christmas sweater party in Hermiston.

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### NEW GROUND

Developer breaks ground on the second phase of the Cimmaron Terrace subdivision in Hermiston

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### GAS TAX

Oregonians will see another gas tax increase in January.

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## BY THE WAY

### Herald to publish on Tuesday for the next two weeks

In honor of Christmas and New Year's, the **Hermiston Herald** offices will close at noon on Dec. 24 and Jan. 31 and will be closed completely on Dec. 25 (Christmas Day) and Jan. 1 (New Year's Day). The newspaper will also be delivered to homes and newsstands a day early the next two weeks, arriving on Dec. 24 and Jan. 31.

The **Umatilla County Cultural Coalition** is accepting applications for 2020 grant funding for local arts, heritage and humanities projects. Applications are available at [www.umatillacounty-culture.org](http://www.umatillacounty-culture.org) and are due Friday, Jan. 24. For more information, email [umatillacountyculture@gmail.com](mailto:umatillacountyculture@gmail.com).

Funding for the grants is received from contributions made to **Oregon Cultural Trust**. In 2019, 15 **Umatilla County** projects received a total of \$14,385.

To make a tax-credit contribution to Oregon Cultural Trust, first make a

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## The Wild West lives, in the heart of **ROY DRAGO**



Staff photo by Ben Lonergan  
Umatilla County Sheriff's Deputy Roy Drago, 90, cuts his birthday cake as Umatilla County Sheriff Terry Rowan watches on at a birthday party for Drago on Friday. The 90-year-old sheriff's deputy was born in Yonkers, N.Y. on December 13, 1929.

### At age 90, Umatilla County deputy is one of the oldest in the U.S.

By **JESSICA POLLARD**  
STAFF WRITER

The year was 1985. Then-Morrow County Sheriff Roy Drago spotted a white 1966 Plymouth—reportedly stocked with thousands of dollars worth of stolen Eastern Oregon Bank receipts—heading north on Ella Road in Ione.

Drago went in for a high speed chase, and fired a shot at the vehicle, according to a historical account published by the Oregon Sheriff's Association.

"Rural Oregon then was quite different than rural Oregon today. It was more like the old west days," Drago said.

The chase eventually culminated in the arrest of two escaped prison inmates, including John William Krebs, grand-

son of the bank's founder. Just two years prior, Krebs pleaded guilty to charges surrounding a robbery of the same bank according to the *Heppner Gazette-Times*. Drago was there for that too.

And while Drago retired from his four-term reign as Morrow County Sheriff in 1999, he's still a staple in the Eastern Oregon law enforcement community.

He celebrated his 90th birthday at the Stafford Hansell Government Center Friday afternoon and went back to work Monday morning as a court security deputy for the Umatilla County Sheriff's Office in Hermiston.

"He's one of the oldest active deputies in the U.S.," Sheriff Terry Rowan said. "He's had quite the career."

Of course, life is slightly mellower

now. "I don't do a whole lot anymore," Drago said.

When he's not working, he enjoys fishing with his son who lives in Boardman and seeing his grandchildren. He used to hunt, but gave up the sport almost three decades ago.

And after a law enforcement career spanning almost 50 years he's grappling with the modern era of policing.

"My observations are that the pendulum has swung so far to the left in terms of laws and how criminals are treated. We seem to have lost our perspective on punishment," he said. "I wouldn't recommend a law enforcement career for

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## Heavy smoke closes City Hall

Building will remain closed Wednesday because of smoke damage, city officials say

HERMISTON HERALD

Several fire trucks rushed to Hermiston City Hall on Tuesday evening as staff reported smoke coming from the vents.

Occupants of the building evacuated about 4:45 p.m., and 25 firefighters responded to what Umatilla County Fire District 1 stated was a fire inside the building.

They climbed onto the roof and did an "interior attack" as they searched for the source of



Staff photo by Jessica Pollard  
Firefighters from Umatilla County Fire District 1 prepare to enter Hermiston City Hall following reports of smoke coming from vents inside the building before 5 p.m. Tuesday.

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