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BY THE WAY

Food drive to benefit Agape House

By JADE MCDOWELL
NEWS EDITOR

As the country's economic crisis deepens, the Agape House in Hermiston continues to need supplies to serve needy families and individuals.

A food drive is underway for the nonprofit. People can drop off non-perishable food items at the Agape House, 500 West Harper Road, on Tuesday and Thursday from 9 a.m. to noon or 1-3 p.m. or Friday 9 a.m. to noon.

Items that are especially needed include boxes of macaroni and cheese, crackers, applesauce, canned fruits and vegetables, granola bars, instant oatmeal, ramen, cereal and canned soup.

People can also mail in or drop off checks to help the nonprofit purchase items for its food bank.

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Some Hermiston residents celebrated National Doctors Day last week by supporting Good Shepherd Health Care System.

City Auto Sales pitched in by purchasing 100 hot meals from Ruty's Restaurant for Good Shepherd staff to enjoy during their shift.

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Ahead of the curve



Staff photo by Ben Lonergan
Michael Mehlman, left, and Allyssa Sullivan place student materials in bags to distribute to parents while assisting the Umatilla School District with distributing school materials to students on Wednesday afternoon.

Local school districts get a running start on distance learning

By JADE MCDOWELL
NEWS EDITOR

The country may be trying to “flatten the curve” when it comes to coronavirus, but when it comes to distance learning, Umatilla School District is ahead of the curve.

The Oregon Department of Education had previously told districts that they could offer “supplemental” educational opportunities, but they couldn't continue official classes with grades, as it would be unfair to students who didn't have internet access. But on the evening of March 30, the department reversed course abruptly with a statement that there was a “very real potential” that students won't return to the classroom at the end of April after all, and districts must pivot to “distance learning for all” by April 13.

Umatilla School District Superintendent Heidi Sipe said the district's current “supplemental” learning opportunities already look a lot like distance learning, with class video chats through Google Classroom and homework packets for students to fill out.

“The only difference is we can give grades now,” she said.

Last Wednesday, the district's principals began traveling door-to-door, delivering Chromebooks (simple, inexpensive



Staff photo by Ben Lonergan
A bin of school supplies rests on the ground as students pick up supplies, lunches and other materials from a bus operated by the Umatilla School District.

laptops mostly used for internet access) to students who requested to check one out. Sipe said the district had already been using about 1,700 Chromebooks — enough for every student in the district — in the classroom. They replace them on a rotating basis and are handing out the ones that need to be replaced soonest first in case they get broken. If one gets stolen, the district can remotely shut it down so it doesn't work anymore.

“We're hoping that will be a deterrent,” she said.

Internet access for all is a bigger hurdle for districts attempting to implement distance learning, particularly for a district like Umatilla where a majority of students live in low-income households. But Umatilla School District has been working in partnership with internet providers

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Umatilla County has 3 new coronavirus cases

Latest recommendation from experts at the CDC is for people to wear masks when out in public areas

HERMISTON HERALD

Umatilla County Public Health announced Monday that three new cases of COVID-19 were identified, bringing Umatilla County's total since the beginning of the outbreak to eight.

According to a press release, one of the people diagnosed with the coronavirus was in close contact with one of the two cases in Morrow County, while the other two Umatilla County patients have no connection to each other or any of

the other previous cases.

All three of the new COVID-19 cases are self-isolating and recovering at home.

As with previous cases, Umatilla County is declining to release the patient's city of residence, their age ranges or any other demographic information. However, in a news release announcing the county's fifth case last week, the county noted that “each of the cases has been in a different town so no population center is really exempt

and there is no area of Umatilla County where it isn't important to follow the guidelines.” The fact that the two newest cases were picked up from an unknown origin also supports public health experts' assertion that the outbreak is more widespread than official testing numbers show.

Joe Fiumara, the department's director, said last week that the county's more recent cases have had a shorter list of people to notify of possible exposure, suggesting that many people in the county are



Staff photo by Ben Lonergan, File
Large signs at the perimeter of the Good Shepherd Health Care System campus instruct those arriving at the hospital on newly enacted procedures.

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