

# Hermiston Herald

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 15, 2020

HermistonHerald.com

\$1.50

**INSIDE**

**INTERNET**

Companies and school districts are offering free and reduce-price internet options for students  
**Page » A3**

**GARDENING**

Local nurseries are seeing a jump in business as people plant more while they stay at home.  
**Page » A7**

**WRESTLING**

Hermiston's Sam Cadena named All-EO Wrestler of the Year.  
**Page » A10**

**BY THE WAY**

**Sen. Wyden to hold virtual town hall on Friday**

HERMISTON HERALD

U.S. Sen. Ron Wyden will hold a live, online town hall open to all Oregonians at 10:30 a.m. on Friday.

Wyden usually holds at least one in-person town hall in each of Oregon's 36 counties each year, for a total of 970 so far.

The senator said in a statement that he always looks forward "very much" to the opportunity to hear from Oregonians in every part of the state as they share their views and ask questions.

"The coronavirus public health crisis puts those in-person community meetings on hold for the moment, but we can still have these civil conversations that focus on finding productive solutions that make sense for Oregonians," he said.

Anyone who wants to watch the town hall can do so online at [www.facebook.com/Town-HallProject](http://www.facebook.com/Town-HallProject). People who wish to submit a question should fill out the form found at [www.wyden.senate.gov/town-halls](http://www.wyden.senate.gov/town-halls) ahead of time.

See BTW, Page A2

## Keeping the economy afloat



Staff photo by Ben Lonergan

Workers sit behind clear panels at Umatilla Electric Cooperative's new Business Resource Center in Hermiston on Friday afternoon.

## Agencies look for ways to help as shutdowns continue

By JADE MCDOWELL  
NEWS EDITOR

Local businesses may be hoping to reopen soon after Gov. Kate Brown's March executive orders shutting them down, but it could be a while.

On Tuesday, Brown held a conference on "reopening" Oregon's economy, outlining the criteria the state would need to meet before businesses could reopen safely, without causing a new spike in cases that could overwhelm hospital capacity.

"We all want to get back to work and return to life as normal as quickly as possible, but the truth is the best path forward is a cautious one — a path that proceeds gradually, incrementally and carefully. A path that relies on science and facts to determine each step forward," Brown said.

In consultation with epidemiologists and public health officials, Brown said several components would need to be in place before bans started to lift:

- The growth of new cases would need to see a declining number of new cases over a period of time, the exact metrics of which a panel of health experts is working to determine now.
- The state would need adequate personal protection equipment, such as gloves and masks, not only for treatment of COVID-19 patients but also to resume currently postponed procedures, such as dental work, screenings and surgeries for things that aren't life-threatening.
- The state would need a "robust public framework" to ramp up testing capacity and contact tracing in all parts of the state, quickly identify-



Staff photo by Ben Lonergan

Closed signs and appointment signs adorn windows in downtown Hermiston last week as businesses grapple with how to function under Gov. Kate Brown's stay home order.

ing new cases and isolating them and their recent contacts.

- All parts of the state would need the ability to quarantine local cases, including those who are homeless or live in group settings, such as nursing homes.

At that point, Brown said, restrictions would slowly lift, likely with new requirements until a vaccine or reliable cure is available. Manicurists and hair stylists may be required to wear masks and gloves, for example.

While businesses across the country wait to reopen or resume normal operations, local, state and federal agencies are doing what they can to help those businesses.

Umatilla County is offering \$1,000

grants to businesses with 25 or fewer employees that have been impacted by COVID-19. Grant applications can be found at [www.umatillacounty.net/grants](http://www.umatillacounty.net/grants) and are due April 21.

The federal Paycheck Protection Program allows small businesses and non-profits — those with fewer than 500 employees — to borrow up to 2.5 times their monthly payroll to pay rent, utilities and payroll for eight weeks.

The loan will be fully forgiven if borrowers follow the rules of the loan, including spending at least 75% of the forgiven amount on payroll and not decreasing staff or wages during the time period.

See Economy, Page A12

## Schools closed for the rest of the school year

By JADE MCDOWELL  
NEWS EDITOR

It was always a possibility, but now it's official: Oregon schools will remain closed for the rest of the school year.

Previously the state had left the door open to in-person classes resuming at the end of April, but on April 8 Governor Kate Brown announced in a press conference that schools will continue through distance learning for the rest of the 2019-2020 school year.

"I know there is a lot of anxiety over how we will move forward," she said. "I know our students are extremely disappointed they are missing classes, prom and graduation ceremonies. But the best thing we can do for the health of our chil-

dren and for thousands of educators across the state is to give everyone certainty by announcing the decision today to close in-person classes for the remainder of the school year. School, and learning, will continue as best as we can by using remote means."

She said remote learning could look like a lot of different things for students, such as video classes, interactive online activities, phone calls and filling out paper homework packets.

Brown said the decision was made in consultation with health and education experts and was made with the health and safety of students and school employees in mind, but acknowledged the burden



Staff photo by Ben Lonergan

Umatilla School District Superintendent Heidi Sipe checks in with staff and volunteers on a bus delivering school supplies to students in Umatilla. Schools will be closed the rest of the school year, state officials announced April 8.

See Schools, Page A12



8 08805193294 2