

Hermiston High School graduation is one for the history books

By **JADE MCDOWELL**
NEWS EDITOR

A global pandemic made this year's graduation unique, but Hermiston High School seniors still got to walk across a stage to receive their diploma on Thursday, June 4.

Most seniors said that moment was the most important part of graduation anyway.

"I'm just looking forward to getting my diploma and walking across the stage, even if it is different than it normally would be," said Eliana Esparza.

Only 25 people were supposed to be in the building at a time, in keeping with the state's COVID-19 restrictions. To make it all work, the school district choreographed an intricate system that took five minutes and 14 seconds to explain in a video tutorial posted to YouTube the day before.

At 5:45 p.m., speakers inside the building began addressing the cameras in the commons room that were broadcasting the speech live online.

Outside, family members of the first batch of graduates stood in line two by two, 6 feet apart, as if preparing to board Noah's Ark.

"Sixteen?" athletic director Larry Usher yelled out to the group. "Anyone have tickets for number 16?"

He let a few more sets of parents enter, then let everyone within earshot know that there were water bottles in the giant cooler sitting against the wall.

"Thank you for your patience. It's going to be an interesting evening," he said.

"It's been an interesting school year!" a woman called back.

On the other side of the building, graduating seniors in bright purple robes stood in clumps, waiting for their number to be called.

Students couldn't hear the speeches going on inside as they waited to enter. Some said they would watch them online later at home; others said they didn't plan to.

Sydney Ellis said she

was sad she wouldn't get to enter with a walking partner, as is traditional for commencement ceremonies, but she was excited to get her diploma.

It was an end to a difficult semester, she said, when everything fun about school was canceled and "our continuing education was really just homework every day."

Nearby, Emma Flanagan said there were upsides to the unique ceremony.

"I like that we were able to graduate in our own high school like they used to instead of going up to Washington," she said.

To get through the long list of graduates with only a few people in the building at a time, seniors were given two tickets for guests. Flanagan said she chose her father and her sister to witness the event in person, while others could watch online.

Inside, students walk up to the stage one by one over the course of more than two hours and receive their diploma from Principal Tom Spoo as an announcer read their name and honors they had received.

After exiting and walking down the long purple carpet stretching from the main entrance of the school, Blake Betz said his graduation was certainly different than years past, but sometimes "you just have to roll with it." He said he was sad his class missed out on a lot of end-of-year traditions, including, ironically, senior skip day.

Joanna Balderas said she wished more of her family could have been there, but she was happy to see a few of her teachers again as they helped out with the event.

"It was definitely not normal, you could say, but it was really exciting," she said of the entire graduation experience.

The evening wrapped up at 8:45 p.m. with closing remarks by Gregory Anderson.

"Whatever you do, live your life well, and remember that adventure is out there. You just have to look for it," he told his class.



Staff photo by Ben Lonergan

Nazly Chavez Moncada delivers a welcome address in Spanish during Hermiston High School's commencement ceremony at the school on Thursday, June 4, 2020.



Staff photo by Ben Lonergan

Skylar Foreman walks out of Hermiston High School after receiving his diploma during Hermiston High School's commencement ceremony at the high school on Thursday, June 4, 2020.



Staff photo by Ben Lonergan

Jazmin Macias delivers the class history during Hermiston High School's commencement ceremony at the high school on Thursday, June 4, 2020.



Staff photo by Ben Lonergan

Cole Abbott waits, socially distanced from other graduates, while waiting to cross the stage at Hermiston High School's commencement ceremony at the high school on Thursday, June 4, 2020.



Staff photo by Ben Lonergan


Families stand and take pictures of their graduates during Hermiston High School's commencement ceremony at the high school on Thursday, June 4, 2020.



Staff photo by Ben Lonergan

Parents and families wait in line to watch their graduates cross the stage during Hermiston High School's commencement ceremony at the high school on Thursday, June 4, 2020.

 Follow us on Facebook!



Morrow County Victim Impact Panel Cancelled

The Morrow County Victim Impact Panel previously scheduled for Tuesday, June 16, 2020 has been cancelled due to lack of facility space that will allow adequate social distancing. The Victim Impact Panel will be rescheduled to a later date this fall. Any individual that was scheduled to participate with the Morrow County Victim Impact Panel is encouraged to contact Julia Finch with the Morrow County District Attorney Office and request notification of the new date and time of the panel. Julia Finch can be reached at (541) 676-5665, or at jfinch@co.morrow.or.us

El Comité de Impacto de Víctimas del Condado de Morrow se ha cancelado

El Comité de Impacto de Víctimas del Condado de Morrow programado previamente para el martes, 16 de junio del 2020 ha sido cancelado debido a no tener espacio en una instalación que permita el distanciamiento social adecuado. El Comité de Impacto de Víctimas se programará nuevo para otra fecha de este otoño. Se le pide a cualquier persona que se haya programado a participar en el Comité de Impacto de Víctimas del Condado de Morrow que se ponga en contacto con Julia Finch a la Oficina de la Fiscalía del Distrito del Condado de Morrow (Morrow County Prosecutors Office) y que solicite notificación de una nueva fecha y hora del comité. Se puede comunicar con Julia Finch vía telefónica al (541) 676-5665, o vía correo electrónico: jfinch@co.morrow.or.us



NEW SOCIAL DISTANCING GUIDELINES
SEE OUR WEBSITES!

Flamby

EST. 1883

Steakhouse, Saloon, Cafe & Western Store

NOW OPEN

Dine In or Take Out
541.278.1100

CAFE Open daily 8am - 4pm	SALOON Open daily 4-10pm Happy Hour 4-6pm	STEAKHOUSE Open daily 5-8:30pm	WESTERN STORE Monday - Saturday 10am-6pm Sunday 10am - 3pm
-------------------------------------	--	--	---

CLOTHING GIFTS JEWELRY BOOTS HATS SADDLES



We look forward to seeing you!

Corner of Court & Main, Pendleton, Oregon • 541.278.1100

03190.BS.5.20