



Staff photo by Ben Lonergan, File

Plastic cups shoved into the fence at the tennis courts at Hermiston High School offer a message of encouragement from the school's staff.

UPDATES

GEODC offers second round of grant funding

The Greater Eastern Oregon Development Corporation has \$370,000 available to support small businesses in its coverage area.

The money comes from Business Oregon, which approved \$5 million state-wide in the second round of grants through the Emergency Business Assistance Grant Fund to help businesses that have been impacted by COVID-19 but have not received federal CARES Act funding.

According to a news release, businesses with fewer than 25 employees are eligible, including sole proprietors, and "historically disadvantaged" business owners are encouraged to apply. They may use the proceeds for any business-related operating expense, including the costs associated with reopening while complying with additional state guidelines for COVID-19.

GEODC Executive Director Susan Christensen said in a statement that the grant funds "will support women, minority, disadvantaged, and sole proprietor businesses as they make their comeback."

The \$370,000 is divided between the seven counties GEODC covers. Umatilla County has \$200,000 allotted, and \$30,000 is available to Morrow County businesses.

— *Hermiston Herald*

ROUGH DRAFT

School districts work on plans for class in the age of COVID-19

By JADE MCDOWELL
NEWS EDITOR

The Class of 2020 left high school under unique circumstances with "socially distant" graduations this month, but for their younger peers, the effects of COVID-19 on their education continue.

The Oregon Department of Education released guidelines on June 10 for schools to be able to reopen their doors in the fall, directing school districts to use the framework to put

together their own plans.

"It's a lot," Hermiston School District Superintendent Tricia Mooney said of the 47-page document on the day it was released. "There's a lot to digest, and with it released today, at the district level we need to put together a team to look at that and put a plan together."

She said the district plans to start school on Aug. 24, and getting the official word from the state on what needs to happen "puts us one step closer to having kids back in the buildings."

The state's report sets broad standards — students' desks



HH file photo

Pens, pencils and erasers await organization as teachers prepare their classrooms at Rocky Heights Elementary School in Hermiston in 2019. Next year, students will not be allowed to share supplies to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission.

Summer meals

Hermiston School District will continue to provide free breakfast and lunch for children under 18 throughout the summer. Meals will be dropped off at the same bus stops as during the school year, but will no longer be delivered to door steps. Pickup locations for meals are Armand Larive Middle School, Sandstone Middle School, Hermiston High School and West Park Elementary School from 7:30-8:30 a.m. for breakfast and 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. for lunch.

must be 6 feet apart with 35 square feet of space per person in the room, students must be kept together with the same "cohort" as much as possible, and staff coming within 6 feet

of students must be masked. But each district must come up with their own plan for how that is accomplished.

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Pandemic adds a new accessory to peoples' wardrobes

By JADE MCDOWELL
NEWS EDITOR

When the world's top fashion brands were planning out their 2020 looks, they probably weren't expecting masks to become a hot spring fashion item.

The pandemic has spawned a cottage industry of mask-makers, however, who have pulled out their sewing machines in recent months and responded to the sudden demand for comfortable face coverings with a little flair.

Paula Messenger of Hermiston has a collection of masks in a variety of colors and patterns, including a University of Oregon mask, one for the Seattle Seahawks and a purple and gold one for Hermiston's graduation.

"I determine what shirt I'm going to wear, and then determine what mask I can wear that will match that, and try to have fun with it, even though this is a serious thing," she said.

COVID-19 is very serious to Messenger, who has a health condition that makes her immunocompromised and at high risk from the virus. She also has friends who are sick with it now. So she wears a mask every time she has to go out, and hopes that even if the mask covers up her smile, the fun patterns might make someone smile anyway.

"I get the feeling I'll start to get



Contributed photo

Kathy Street ordered this hippo mask from the Cincinnati Zoo to support Fiona, one of the zoo's hippopotamuses.

Christmas masks and things like that too," she said.

Messenger got some of her masks from Josie Sisson, a friend she made in Hermiston who now lives in Moses Lake, Washington. Sisson said her daughter is a cancer survivor and her husband is

an essential worker, so she dusted off her old sewing machine and made them masks at the beginning of the pandemic. Since then, she has shipped 840 masks to people around the country who found her through Facebook when she started selling her extra



Contributed photo

Paula and Pat Messenger dressed up in Hawaiian shirts and Oregon Ducks masks to virtually attend an online wedding ceremony for friends who had canceled their destination wedding for something small streamed online.

masks online.

Sisson said her most popular masks are Seattle Seahawks, followed by college mascots, animal prints and Marvel's Avengers.

"I cannot walk into Joann's (fabric store) without walking out with a lot of cool fabrics," she said.

"I have 65 different fabrics now people can choose from."

Since the early days when masks were nowhere to be found on store shelves and people were making them for themselves,

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