

EDITOR'S DESK

What is newsworthy?

A guide to news submission by the editor of the Hermiston Herald

When someone submits an idea for a story to us, they often preface it with, "I'm not sure if this is newsworthy, but ..."



Jade McDowell
NEWS EDITOR

I wish I could give everyone a checklist to help them know on their own what coverage a story will merit, but the somewhat chaotic nature of news means there are no easy answers. People often mean "Must be a slow news day" as an insult, but there is a lot of truth behind the statement. Something that might be front page one day may be left out of the paper altogether on a different day.

Part of our job is to put out a newspaper full of words and pictures by every deadline, no matter how much is actually going on in our coverage area. The number of pages in each edition is determined not by the amount of news reporters have written, but by how much advertising has been sold to cover the costs of the printing of those pages (so if you enjoy a story in the print edition, I would encourage you to thank a business that paid for advertising on that page).

Newsworthiness is also in the eye of the beholder, to some extent. What sounds like a snooze-fest of a



Staff photo by Ben Lonergan

A man begins clearing a downed tree from Southeast Fifth Street in Hermiston on Saturday, May 30, 2020. The storm was part of a particularly newsworthy week in Hermiston that caused some stories that had been planned for the paper to be cut.

brief to one reporter can sound like a fun feature story to another.

What that means for people hoping to get a story in the newspaper is that it's really best to just ask if we would be interested, or take the initiative to send a press release. If you do, one of four things will likely happen:

First, we may respond with an enthusiastic yes, working with you to set up interviews and photos for a full-length feature story.

Second, we may simply use the information you sent us to write up something short, possibly after asking a couple of follow-up questions.

Third, we may tell you that there are no reporters free at the time of the event, or we don't have the resources right now for someone to spend time on it, but if you send us a photo and some information we would be happy to put it in somewhere.

Fourth, we may tell you that it is not a good fit for our paper. That could happen for a number of reasons, most commonly that it just wouldn't be interesting or relevant to a majority of our readers. In other cases, it seems the story idea is more advertising than news, or we checked into the tip and found it

was incorrect.

We also usually stay away from what I call "bad customer service" stories — a he-said-she-said incident where someone claims a local business or landlord didn't give them a refund or otherwise treated them poorly. In those cases, we'd rather the case be handled by an organization with the relevant authority, such as small claims court, the Better Business Bureau or a state regulatory agency.

If you've stuck with me this far, here are a few more tips:

1) Some stories are interesting, and some stories are important. The best stories are both.

2) Give us the who, what, when, where, why and how, along with contact information of someone who will be responsive if we have a question.

3) If you call at the last minute requesting coverage, it is less likely a reporter will be available. Also keep in mind we print the week's paper on Tuesdays at 7 p.m., and plan accordingly.

4) If you're going to submit photos, make sure they are clear, high-resolution shots of something interesting to look at (no blurry photos of the backs of people's heads copied from a Facebook page).

With all that in mind, I hope you will keep us in mind in the future. Just remember: We can't cover it if we don't know about it!

COLUMN

Resource officers build bridges with students

By **TRICIA MOONEY**
GUEST COLUMNIST

Hermiston is at its best when people are working together. In the school district, we value any opportunity for our students to better understand how this community works, and what role they play in it.

It's why we invite professionals of all kinds to interact with our students through job fairs, work study programs, presentations, and other extracurricular activities. It's also one of the reasons we have had a long and productive relationship with the Hermiston Police Department through our school resource officer program.

Similar programs in other school districts have faced criticism, and even been discontinued in recent weeks because of mistrust of police.

I can't speak for other schools, other communities, or other police departments. But in Hermiston, we have worked hard to create close and professional bonds with our partners and believe strongly in the value of building on those rela-

tionships. We believe the program is worth our investment and creates a better community while providing a safer learning environment.

School resource officers are a positive bridge between police and students. They allow students to understand the role of officers as community problem-solvers, not simply law enforcement. And the officers work hard to build the credibility and rapport with students of all grade levels so they can speak candidly about safety issues like avoiding dangerous situations and resolving conflict.

The program is also proactive. Rather than looking for ways to get students in trouble or write citations, the school officers seek ways to create learning opportunities. Many students face challenging home lives and negative peer pressure on a daily basis. By getting to know these students, resource officers can offer better guidance and help connect them with other school resources to address issues before they become serious problems.

These officers are selected for their interest in working with students and ability to culturally connect with them. They are committed for a full school year at a time and develop lasting bonds.

Having trained officers in our

schools also gives administrators and educators access to their expertise in safety procedures. Student safety is our top concern, whether its limiting exposure to communicable disease, providing staff training for emergencies, or protecting against physical threats.

Regardless of shifting public perceptions around the country, we will always strive to do what's best for our kids in Hermiston. We're aware of the potential that exists for violence to enter our schools and know that having a regular police presence is both a deterrent and an important safety measure.

When school returns in the fall, we will have an officer dedicated to each grade level — elementary, middle school, and high school. These officers will join in our common goal of educating, protecting, serving, guiding, and preparing our students for the world.

Our schools are a microcosm of the community, and our community relies on trust and cooperation. Investing in school resource officers creates a safer environment in our hallways, our streets, and our students' home lives.

Dr. Tricia Mooney is the superintendent of the Hermiston School District.



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CORRECTIONS

It is the policy of the Hermiston Herald to correct errors as soon as they are discovered. Incorrect information will be corrected on Page 2A. Errors committed on the Opinion page will be corrected on that page. Corrections also are noted in the online versions of our stories.

Please contact the editor at editor@hermistonherald.com or call (541) 564-4533 with issues about this policy or to report errors.

SUBMIT A LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Letters Policy: Letters to the Editor is a forum for the Hermiston Herald readers to express themselves on local, state, national or world issues. Brevity is good, but longer letters should be kept to 250 words.

No personal attacks; challenge the opinion, not the person. The Hermiston Herald reserves the right to edit letters for length and for content.

Letters must be original and signed by the writer or writers. Anonymous letters will not be printed. Writers should include a telephone number so they can be reached for questions. Only the letter writer's name and city of residence will be published.

OBITUARY POLICY

The Hermiston Herald publishes paid obituaries. The obituary can include small photos and, for veterans, a flag symbol at no charge. Expanded death notices will be published at no charge. These include information about services. Obituaries may be edited for spelling, proper punctuation and style.

Obituaries and notices may be submitted online at hermistonherald.com/obituaryform, by email to obits@hermistonherald.com, by fax to 541-276-8314, placed via the funeral home or in person at the Hermiston Herald or East Oregonian offices. For more information, call 541-966-0818 or 1-800-522-0255, x221.