

New Pepes Market in Hermiston serves up traditional Mexican treats

By NADA SEWIDAN
STAFF WRITER

What started out as a small snow cone cart in front of the Muniz home has turned into a full-scale convenience store tucked in the middle of Hermiston.

Three years ago, the Muniz family started serving up Mexican snow cones in front of their home, where neighbors and friends often stopped by for a treat. Years later on May 19, the idea grew from a small cart into Pepes Market. Owner Rafael Muniz, alongside his wife and 15-year-old son, said they still serve many of those neighbors and friends who came to their cart, with the addition of new faces from surrounding homes near the market.

“A lot of people know us; people that went to that stand are now coming here,” Muniz said.

Tucked between West Hermiston Avenue and Ninth Street, the market has the regular convenience favorites, like chips, drinks and other snacks. What makes Pepes unique, accord-



Staff photo by Nada Sewidan
The Muniz family, Rafael Muniz (left), Solidad Silva (middle) and Jose Muniz (right), stand in front of Pepes Market at 905 W. Hermiston Ave.

ing to Muniz, is their dessert bar chock-full of colorful treats and desserts, dishing out traditional Mexican snacks, drinks and dishes inspired by Muniz’s hometown.

“We wanted to give the flavors of Mexico to the public,”

Muniz said.

Pepes Market is an ode to the Muniz family’s hometown of Colima, a small, sovereign state in Mexico. Muniz said he wanted to present a little piece of Colima here in Hermiston and recalled how on hot after-

noons in the city, the locals flocked to these dessert-type bars for Mexican snow cones, Fruta Picada and Mangoneadas. It’s these dishes, among others, that inspired the family to start their business.

Their desserts contain fruit cut fresh daily and include traditional dishes, such as Paleta De Hielo, a milk-based ice pop, and Diablitos, a traditional dessert that translates to “little devil” and contains hot sauce, spicy tamarind candy and chamoy.

The Muniz family moved to Hermiston 19 years ago and worked in the farming and agriculture industry before transitioning to business ownership. Pepes Market was originally set to open in January, but due to COVID-19 the grand opening was delayed. This is the first store they’ve owned and Muniz hopes that people in town will stop by for some authentic Mexican treats and get to know a little bit of their food traditions in the process.

Pepes Market is open from 9 a.m. to 8 p.m. and is located on 905 W. Hermiston Ave.

IN THE WORKS

After a slowdown, more housing on the way

May was a slow month for new housing in Hermiston, according to the city’s records of building permits issued during the month.

Only one building permit for a new home was issued, for a \$402,000 home on Alleluia Avenue. The building department also issued a handful of permits for smaller projects, such as a new carport or patio on a home. April was similarly slow, with only one single family dwelling approved.



Jade McDowell
NEWS EDITOR

In May 2019, the city issued permits for 14 single-family dwellings and two manufactured homes. In April 2019, it issued permits for 10 single-family homes, a manufactured home and eight town homes with four to eight units apiece.

Developers have assured me that there is still plenty of hope for Hermiston’s housing market, however, in new subdivisions that are still in the works for later this year.

The Hermiston Planning Commission met June 10 to discuss a final plat for Theater Park. The new subdivision is planned by MonteVista Homes for West Theater Lane near the movie theater, and will feature 53 single-family dwellings.

Hermiston School District has also submitted an application for a conditional use permit from the planning commission. The permit will allow the district to build two new softball fields on the north side of Hermiston High School on the former fairgrounds, just west of the new parking lot the high school added off Orchard Avenue.

The fields will replace the two that are currently located at Rocky Heights Elementary School, allowing the school district to keep the Rocky Heights building available for students to attend next school year while working on building the new, larger Rocky Heights building where the softball fields currently stand.

That’s all for this week’s In the Works, and remember, if you are planning a new business or other venture in Hermiston, tips for this column can be emailed to editor@hermistonherald.com.

Port of Morrow barge services receive federal support

HERMISTON HERALD

The U.S. Department of Transportation awarded Tidewater Barge Lines, Inc. with a \$3.2 million grant to expand barge services between the Port of Morrow in Boardman and Vancouver, Washington.

The grant, which was announced in both a joint news release from Oregon’s Democratic Sens. Jeff Merkley and Ron Wyden and a separate release from Republican Rep. Greg Walden, will include the procurement of a new barge capable of handling a combination of containers that will reduce area traffic by diverting freight to the underused marine corridor.

“This grant will directly support increased barge service through the Port of Morrow, helping grow the economy and create family wage jobs here in Eastern Oregon,” Ryan Neal, executive director of the Port of Morrow, said in a statement. “As the Project Sponsor, the Port was proud to support this grant request, which hinged on the strong public-private (relationship) between our community and Tidewater Barge Lines.”

Todd Busch, president and CEO of Tidewater Barge Lines, said the effort will help reduce carbon emissions and traffic congestion in the Pacific Northwest by transitioning more shipping from truck to barge.



HH file photo
A Tidewater barge moves down the Columbia River in 2015 near the Wallula Gap east of Umatilla.



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