

Amazon Web Services donates to area organizations

By **JADE MCDOWELL**
NEWS EDITOR

Communities in Umatilla and Morrow counties are getting a \$520,000 boost from Amazon Web Services.

The company is donating the money it was set to receive from Umatilla Electric Cooperative, according to a news release from UEC.

The not-for-profit, member-owned utility operates at cost and refunds profits to its members through its Capital Credits program, based on the amount of power a customer purchased. Amazon is working with UEC to donate its share of the refund to provide relief from the economic impacts of COVID-19.

The money is divided between the following entities:

- \$250,000 to UEC and Hermiston Energy Services to provide assistance to low-income households struggling to pay their utility bills. According to the release, the money is enough to cover the average energy bill for more than 1,000 households for two months.
- \$25,000 each to the Irrigon Food Pantry, Stanfield Food



Mark Gomolski loads food into a box while volunteering at the Agape House in Hermiston in 2018. The Agape House was one of several area food pantries to receive a \$25,000 donations from Amazon Web Services in June 2020.

HH file photo

Basket, Pendleton's Community Outreach Food Pantry, the Agape House in Hermiston and Boardman's food pantry.

- \$20,000 to the Community Action Program of East Central Oregon (CAPECO) for its

senior citizen meal program.

- \$25,000 each to Morrow County, Umatilla and Hermiston school districts and the InterMountain Education Service District to improve students' access to virtual learn-

ing from home.

• \$25,000 to the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation.

The news release stated that "additional funds will be earmarked to help respond to pandemic-related community needs as they are identified in the future."

At the Hermiston City Council meeting on June 22, city councilors and staff expressed their thanks for the investment in their community. City Manager Byron Smith said the money was a "really great contribution for what is becoming a large employer in our area," and Mayor David Drotzmann said he was grateful that even though Amazon could have just kept the money, they decided to be a good community partner instead.

Hermiston Energy Services and Umatilla Electric Cooperative also expressed their thanks in the news release about the donation from Amazon Web Services.

"The effectiveness and reach of the UCARE payment assistance program will be amplified by our collaboration with AWS," said Lisa McMeen, UEC's vice president of administration.

"With such uncertainty and hardship caused by the pandemic, it is great to work with trusted partners like AWS to keep our community operating at this time."

In a separate news release on June 11, Umatilla School District announced that Amazon Web Services had also become a sponsor of the district's robotics program and other after-school programs related to STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math).

According to Superintendent Heidi Sipe, before school was closed students gave guests from the company a tour of their schools and highlighted the needs for the STEM programs.

Following the visit, Amazon donated \$70,000 for equipment, such as 3D printers, cameras, computers and robot parts. After the schools closed, they donated additional laptops to help the programs make the jump to distance learning.

"Years ago, we dreamed of having the type of technology to prepare students for the jobs of tomorrow," Sipe said in a statement. "It's amazing to think that today, we have the technology and the jobs for students right here in Umatilla."

Cleanup options available after storm

HERMISTON HERALD

After a major windstorm hit the region May 30, Umatilla County residents can bring logs, branches and other yard waste generated by the storm damage to the Stanfield Compost Yard on Hoosier Street in Stanfield.

During the June 22 Hermiston City Council meeting, City Manager Byron Smith said the opportunity was a partnership between the cities of Stanfield, Umatilla and Hermiston.

People can get rid of debris for free from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. daily until July 19. The code to open the gate at the compost yard is 7777#.

Umatilla residents can also drop off yard debris, appliances and household garbage at the city's public works shops, 1203 Third St., on July 1-2 from 4-7 p.m.

The city's annual spring cleanup was postponed due to COVID-19 and is now the "Sweep into Summer" event. In addition to the ability to drop off items, residents who need help transporting their waste can arrange ahead of time for a curbside pickup during the event.

For more information or to arrange pick-up, call 541-922-3226 or email esmerelda@umatilla-city.org.



A trampoline, blown by the wind, rests on the roof of a house near downtown Hermiston on Saturday, May 30, 2020.

Staff photo by Ben Lonergan, File

ACADEMIC HONORS

Hermiston student councils recognized

HERMISTON HERALD

Hermiston High School and Sandstone Middle School student councils were recognized by the Oregon Association of Student Councils as high-achieving student councils, according to a news release.

Under normal circumstances, schools are usually recognized during the spring conference; however, due to COVID-19 social distancing guidelines, schools were honored virtually.

The high school student council accepted the Gold Council recognition for outstanding achievement, and Sandstone Middle School

received the Bronze Council award. Recognition is bestowed on the student councils when they achieve standards related to community service, by creating events that promote school spirit and pride, sportsmanship, unity, recognition, and leadership training.

Sara Marks, Sandstone Middle School language arts teacher and Leadership Club advisor, said, "True leadership comes out during challenging times and students proved to be resilient. Prior to the pandemic, the students were actively working to keep students engaged and connected. I am so proud of them!"

LBCC awards degrees to local students

HERMISTON HERALD

Linn-Benton Community College awarded 923 degrees and certificates to 818 students in its 52nd graduating class, including the following Hermiston students:

Breanna Bayer, Associate of Arts Oregon Transfer; Mary S. Hays, Associate of Applied Science occupational therapy assistant; Vanessa V. Stackhouse, Associate of Applied Science diagnostic imaging; Brigitte Valencia Jimenez, Associate of Applied Science occupational therapy assistant.

Although the college

was unable to hold a commencement ceremony this year, LBCC is commemorating grads through online recognition and a commemorative video, which serves as a placeholder until the college can celebrate its grads in person.

In June 2021, LBCC will celebrate its first combined commencement in its history — an in-person event that celebrates both the 2020 graduating class and the 2021 graduating class.

This will provide an opportunity for the 2020 grads to take their symbolic walks across the stage and receive their degree.



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SUNDAY.....English 9:00 am
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