

Children's art brightens Funland rebuild

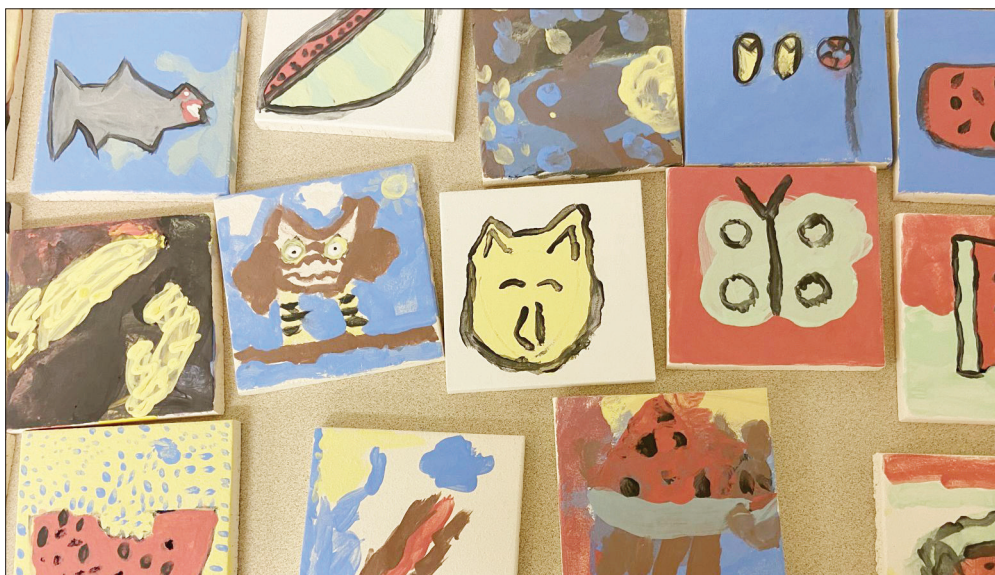
By NADA SEWIDAN
STAFF WRITER

Hermiston Parks & Recreation is keeping with the Hermiston tradition of featuring children's art in the new Funland Rebuild Project, set to open in October.

Between July 7-9, children painted 4-inch tiles as part of the Funland Art Competition that represented Hermiston as a community.

There were approximately 600 tiles available for painting. A group from the parks and recreation department will choose the best painting to be featured on the new playground. Some tiles also will be selected for the donor wall.

Having art created by kids on the playground is a tradition in Hermiston, according to city staff. The first two Funland playground projects were community-built projects, constructed by Hermiston community members. Both of those projects had art created by local children displayed on the playground before it was destroyed in a



Tiles hand-painted by area children will be incorporated in the design of the new Funland Playground.

Staff photo by Nada Sewidan

fire on May 10, 2019.

"The most recent playground that burnt down last year had hand-painted tiles, but none of it survived — it was all destroyed in the fire," said Larry Fetter, director of the city's parks and recreation department.

Originally, the new Funland playground was set to

be completed by Labor Day, but delays in manufacturing as a result of COVID-19 pushed production forward. Fetter said most of the products used to build the playground will arrive July 21. From there, the project will take at least two to three months. He said the ribbon-cutting ceremony will

be some time in the fall, possibly in October.

The playground is a \$1.5 million project. Around \$700,000, is provided by the insurance money from the previous playground. The rest was raised through fundraising.

Fetter said the new playground is unlike its prede-

cessor. It will be mostly constructed using pour-in-place rubber, which is ground-up rubber that gets bonded together and does not move. It can also be colored and manipulated into different shapes. The previous playground used wood chips.

"We are building it bigger, better, stronger," he said. "The materials we're using are nonflammable and are going to be around for a very long time."

It will also include features, such as a restaurant concessions area, farm and agriculture area, the adventure zone, picnic shelter area, Native American historical area and mock storefronts that resemble the early days of Hermiston. There will also be a stage coach built with accessibility in mind, according to Fetter.

The Native American area was reviewed by the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation and will be used to share stories on Native American tradition. The Hispanic Advisory Committee will also

assist Parks and Recreation in creating translations. For example, on the fruit wall, one side will be in English, the other side in Spanish.

Leah Stockard, a designer, artist, and volunteer for the Funland Rebuild Project, said that previously, hundreds of volunteers would be asked to help build the playgrounds, but this time contractors are taking over the building process. Volunteers are still needed to build the fence surrounding the perimeter of the park, but it will be a much less community-oriented process.

Stockard recalled seeing the children whose tiles were displayed on the playground grow up and show it to their children.

"There's ownership in it," she said. "It's a part of history. The kids come running in and they know they get to be part of something important in Hermiston."

For people interested in donating to the Funland Rebuild Project, engraved fence pickets are still for sale.

Girl's garden reaches new heights

By JADE MCDOWELL
NEWS EDITOR

Gracie Tucker-Walls is disappointed the Umatilla County Fair won't go on in its usual format this year, but the Hermiston 6-year-old still wants people to know that the sunflower she grew for it is "really tall."

While Gracie is just shy of 4 feet tall herself, her giant sunflower is over twice her size, passing 9 feet tall. It is part of the garden she helps her aunt and uncle plant every year, and she usually chooses some of the plants she grew to show at the fair. In 2018, her cucumbers received a judge's choice award.

"She helps us with all of it," her aunt Laura Tucker said. "She helps Uncle John plant the garden, she helps water it and weed it."

She said the gardening helps Gracie learn about hard work and about the science behind gardening. "I learned not to plant all the seeds in one hole," Gracie added.

Most of the activities of the Umatilla County Fair have been canceled due to COVID-19, including concerts, the parade and carnival rides. But in May, the fair board announced there would be some opportunities for 4-H and FFA students, and the livestock auction will take place using "available technologies."

Tucker said she wasn't sure if that meant there was an opportunity for Gracie to show her sunflower or other produce, but they would participate if the option was available.



Gracie Tucker-Walls, 6, shows the giant sunflower she is growing.

Photo contributed by Laura Tucker

Agape House sales back on

HERMISTON HERALD

After months on hiatus, the Agape House is resuming its regular parking lot sales beginning Saturday, July 18 from 8:30-11:30 a.m. at Agape House, 500 W. Harper Road. Social distancing guidelines from the Oregon Health Authority will be followed, and a temperature check and face masks will be required.

The sale will include clothing, furniture, household goods, knick-knacks and other items. Proceeds support Eastern Oregon Mission, the parent non-profit of both the Agape House and Martha's House.

For more information, call 541-567-8774. The Agape House's food bank is open Tuesday through Thursday from 9 a.m. to noon and 1-3 p.m., and on Fridays from 9 a.m. to noon.

PET OF THE WEEK

Reece is a very chill & sweet old man that is about 10 years old. He loves to be around his people, but not super cuddly, but he loves to have his ears rubbed. He loves to sit outside in the shade and feel the wind on his face. Reece does have some aging issues, is on a strict diet for his weight and will need regular grooming. Due to his age and health, we prefer he isn't around young children.



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