

NEED FOR *SPEED*

New Hermiston gym offers
'speed school' for athletes

By **NADA SEWIDAN**
STAFF WRITER

When the Hermiston Athletic Club opens, it will be the first gym in Oregon to have a Parisi speed school, according to its manager.

The gym, set to open Monday, July 27, boasts the regular amenities of an athletic club, with added extras, such as the Parisi speed school, a program designed to help athletes improve their speed and endurance.

"There isn't something like this clear to California," Roger Adams, manager at the athletic club, said. "And Hermiston, Oregon, is going to have that."

According to Adams, the Parisi school trains professional athletes. He said the school has trained professional basketball players, NFL players, college football players and other high-level athletes.

At the Parisi speed room, people will be able to do resistance training, side shuffles, sprints and backpedals, among other training and conditioning. They also have a vertical tester and a full assessment program that they run athletes through.

"We're excited about having this here," he said. "We have people from as far as the Tri-Cities and Yakima talking about coming out."

Adams said the gym overall has some great tools to help create great athletes that want to take it to the next step.

"Hopefully, we'll see athletes break through to that Division I level," he said.

The Hermiston Athletic Club sits on the site of the former

*"THERE ISN'T
SOMETHING LIKE
THIS CLEAR TO
CALIFORNIA.
AND HERMIS-
TON, OREGON, IS
GOING TO HAVE
THAT."*

Roger Adams, manager of the new Hermiston Athletic Club

Columbia Court Club, which was gutted by a fire in 2016. The owners of that gym originally planned to reopen, but after two years of arguing with their insurance company, owner Steve Watkinds eventually told the *Hermiston Herald* he had decided to sell.

The new owners then experienced delays of their own during the process of extensively remodeling the damaged building.

COVID-19 has also posed some challenges for the facility, including delaying their opening and causing the club to modify some plans in terms of social distancing. This means all contact sports will have to be postponed until it is safe to resume.

"We still have to follow social distancing," Adams said. "We need to be safe, so that means no contact sports for right now. We want to train, but we want to do it as safely as possible until we all get through the tough times we're in right now."

He said they are following the

See Gym, Page A8



Staff photo by Ben Lonergan

Staff hang a large graphic on the wall of the main workout space at the new Hermiston Athletic Club on Highway 395 in Hermiston. The club will open on Monday, July 27, 2020.



Staff photo by Ben Lonergan

Free weights sit on racks awaiting use at the new Hermiston Athletic Club on Highway 395 in Hermiston. The club will open on Monday, July 27, 2020.

Umatilla forges ahead on back-to-school plans

By **JADE MCDOWELL**
NEWS EDITOR

As Umatilla School District plans its socially distanced return to school, Superintendent Heidi Sipe is also working to help students return to the classroom statewide.

Sipe is serving on the newly formed Healthy Schools Reopening Council, made up of educators, students, public health experts and legislators from around the state. The council gives feedback to the Oregon Department of Education on proposed rules for reopening schools and works on problem-solving for the challenges presented by social distancing restrictions.

One of the topics they tackled at their most recent meeting was what metrics they can provide districts to help them make decisions about when they should temporarily move to online-only in the event of an outbreak.

"There has been a pretty clear and consistent emphasis in recognizing that a statewide approach would be very challenging," Sipe said. "What Helix or Echo can do, with the size of their classes, is very different than what I can do, or Hermiston or Pendleton."

Each district also has different demographics. In Umatilla



Staff photo by Ben Lonergan, File

Graduates parade through Umatilla following Umatilla High School's commencement ceremony on June 4, 2020. The school district is now making plans for returning students to in-person classrooms in the fall.

School District, nearly three-fourths of the students are Latino, more than half are English Language Learners, and more than 95% qualify for free or reduced lunch based on their family's low income.

In a statement about the Healthy Schools Reopening

Council, Gov. Kate Brown said as most districts switch to a hybrid model of in-person and online learning, one of the council's tasks will be to find ways to make sure that model works for every single student.

"I am pushing school officials to make sure underserved and

marginalized students — our kids of color and our low-income kids — get the support and opportunities they need. We cannot allow our response to this pandemic to increase racial disparities in educational outcomes," Brown said.

While each district faces its own unique set of circumstances,

Sipe said there are some common themes that all districts in the state are grappling with. One, for example, is the safety of teachers who fall into categories that put them at higher risk from COVID-19 than most of their students.

"The complexity of that challenge is present in every conversation," she said.

Sipe said locally, she has been having discussions with staff who, due to age or underlying health conditions, have serious concerns about returning to school while COVID-19 is still active in the community. She said she is having discussions with the unions about how to handle leaves of absence and other issues surrounding that discussion.

Hermiston School District hasn't released concrete details about its plans for next year, but Superintendent Tricia Mooney said during a recent city council meeting that it will likely be a hybrid model of online and in-person learning, with in-person contact prioritized for the younger grades that have more difficulty learning online.

Umatilla School District plans

Umatilla School District has ordered Umatilla Vikings buffs for

See School, Page A8

INSIDE

A2 ▶ Church offers Vacation Bible School to go

A3 ▶ Umatilla County Fair plans for unusual fair week

A3 ▶ Door-to-door COVID-19 testing coming to Hermiston

A7 ▶ Hermiston residents continue to wait for unemployment benefits