

## Comet NEOWISE lights up the sky over Eastern Oregon



Comet NEOWISE appears in the sky above rural Umatilla County outside of Hermiston on Wednesday, July 15, 2020. The comet, which is visible through the middle of August, can be seen in the northwest corner of the sky beginning roughly an hour and a half after sunset.

Staff photo by Ben Lonergan

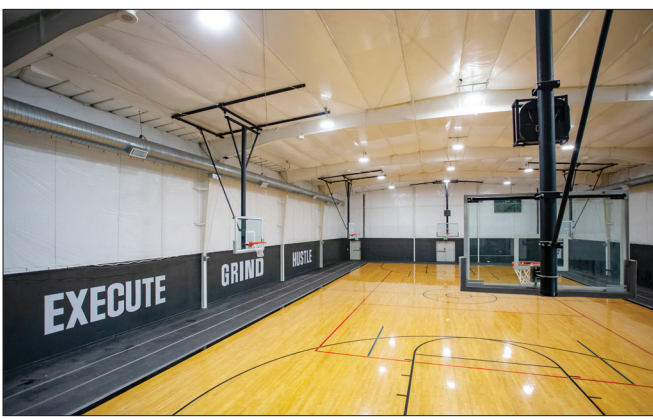
## Gym

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governor's orders. Clients will have to wear masks when they initially walk in, but they can remove them once they start exercising. They also ask all visitors to maintain at least 6 feet of distance and limit physical contact. Adams said there will be signs to remind people of these rules as they come in. He said the facility will be cleaned nightly using a professional cleaning crew and a fogger machine.

Juan Cardoza, a potential member of the gym who recently stopped by for a visit, said he's most excited about the quality of the gym and its amenities, especially the basketball court.

"The quality of the gym, like I was saying to the man-



Staff photo by Ben Lonergan

A basketball court and walking track are among amenities at the new Hermiston Athletic Club on Highway 395 in Hermiston. The club will open on Monday, July 27, 2020.

ager, can produce some more successful athletes; there's really no excuse with all of this equipment," Cardoza said.

Although there are equipment and programs designed for athletes, Adams said he wants to emphasize that the gym is for everyone inter-

ested in improving their health and wellness.

"We want to be all-inclusive and we want everyone to be welcome here, but we also wanted to do something a little bit different," he said. "We want to have people be inspired and motivated and be better, whether it's ath-

letes or everyday people."

The athletic club has several amenities, from a private group training room to indoor track. There will be a group fitness area, offering a full lineup of classes, such as Zumba, yoga, spin and barre. The club will also have a gaming area with consoles, such as Xbox.

Adams said they plan to have volleyball camps and other skills camps led by professional college coaches, as well as dodgeball tournaments, laser tag nights and other similar events to get the community involved.

"We are going to try to be as active in the community as we possibly can and get some fun programs," he said. "We really want this to be a culture of fun and a good environment that improves people's health and fitness."

## School

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all students and staff, as well as clear plastic face shields for staff to wear for extra protection.

Sipe said the buffs — round, scarf-like accessories made famous by the television show "Survivor" — can be worn comfortably around the neck by students, and then pulled up over their mouth and nose when they are near someone else.

Sipe also ordered 300 TV trays for elementary school students to use as small, makeshift desks since schools are not allowed to place students around group tables next year.

"Parents have had concerns about students' return to school," Sipe said.

"It's pretty clear parents are worried about sending their kids back to school, and rightfully so, but they feel like they're between a rock and a hard place, because they have jobs they need to be at," she said.

Sipe said they have been presented with three main options next year.

In the hybrid model, students can return to the classroom four days a week, supplemented by some online learning.

For the second option, students can do schoolwork online and participate in virtual classrooms, including interaction through video chat with an in-person classroom during activities, such as story time.

For the third option, parents who are interested in essentially home schooling their child can get curriculum, homework and tests for them to do on their own time, with just an occasional

check-in with their teacher.

As of July 17, almost a third of the district's families had registered for school, and of those families, about 80% have chosen the hybrid model. Sipe said one thing that has seemed to put parents' mind at ease is that they are allowed to switch during the school year with five days notice, so if one model isn't working for their student, they're not stuck with it all year.

The district now has enough Chromebooks for each student in the district to have one, along with setting up neighborhood Wi-Fi hot spots around town that only the district's Chromebooks can connect to. Another 200 hot spots will be available for check-out by students who aren't near a neighborhood site.

Sipe said in the past, the district had not provided a Chromebook for each student out of concerns that the devices would be lost or damaged. But she said everyone has returned the devices they checked out in the spring, and only a "handful" out of the 1,000 came back with damage.

Once the pandemic is over, she said, students each having their own Chromebook to take home will probably be the new normal.

She said elective classes, such as band or welding, will still be offered, with some online practice throughout the week and the opportunity for students to come in with small, socially distanced cohorts on Fridays to do hands-on work with a teacher.

"Kids want electives," she said. "They want to make sure they can still access the fun parts of school, and we want to make sure that answer is yes."

## New online form available for unemployment applications

By JADE MCDOWELL  
NEWS EDITOR

The Oregon Employment Department, in partnership with Google, has launched a new online tool it says will make it easier for Oregonians to apply for Pandemic Unemployment Assistance.

The Public Unemployment Assistance program is part of the federal CARES Act stimulus package, providing money to people who are unemployed during the pandemic but would not normally qualify for unemployment benefits, such as those who were previously self-employed.

In a news release, the department said the new online form will help the "more than 100,000 mostly self-employed Oregonians who have applied for PUA to get their weekly benefit payments faster."

On May 31, Gov. Kate Brown asked Oregon Employment Director Kay Erickson to resign over the issue, and appointed

David Gerstenfeld as acting director.

"When I took on this role, I made fixing the Pandemic Unemployment Assistance application issue a top priority because we knew it was impacting our ability to get claims processed quickly," Gerstenfeld said in the July 17 news release about the new online reporting tool. "Although the PUA program was set up in just under a month, the temporary solution, a PDF application, was cumbersome and prone to errors. This new form will fix many of the previous issues and help get benefits into the hands of Oregonians more quickly."

People who wish to file a claim can visit the Employment Department's online claim system at [secure.emp.state.or.us/ocs4/index.cfm](https://secure.emp.state.or.us/ocs4/index.cfm) and click on the blue "Pandemic Unemployment Assistance" box to start filling out the form. The form can be used for new claims, or people can use it to re-submit old claims that have not yet been paid out.

According to the news release, the new system will speed up weekly benefit processing by automating the weekly certification process, which staff used to have to process manually. Initial claims will still need reviewed by a claims specialist, but after that, weekly claims will be automatically processed and the money automatically sent.

The online form will also be able to help catch errors that previously held up claims, such as required fields being left blank.

"Important information, such as the COVID-19 reason that makes an applicant eligible for PUA, is required, but has often been missing or left blank on the PDF forms," the release said.

Forms are available in 15 different languages.

The department also launched an informational website about unemployment benefits, at [unemployment.oregon.gov](https://unemployment.oregon.gov), which is in the process of being translated into other languages.

## City urges EyeOnWater use

As temperatures reach over 100 degrees, the city of Hermiston is reminding residents to sign up for the EyeOnWater app to help them save money on their water bill.

The smart phone app, available for free to all city water users, provides hour by hour graphs of a customer's water usage, showing patterns that can help customers determine ways they are wasting water. It also has a leak detection function that will automatically alert residents when they appear to have a leak somewhere on their property.

The app is available for Android and iPhones. To connect the app to their water account, customers need to provide the app with their account number,

zip code and a valid email address.

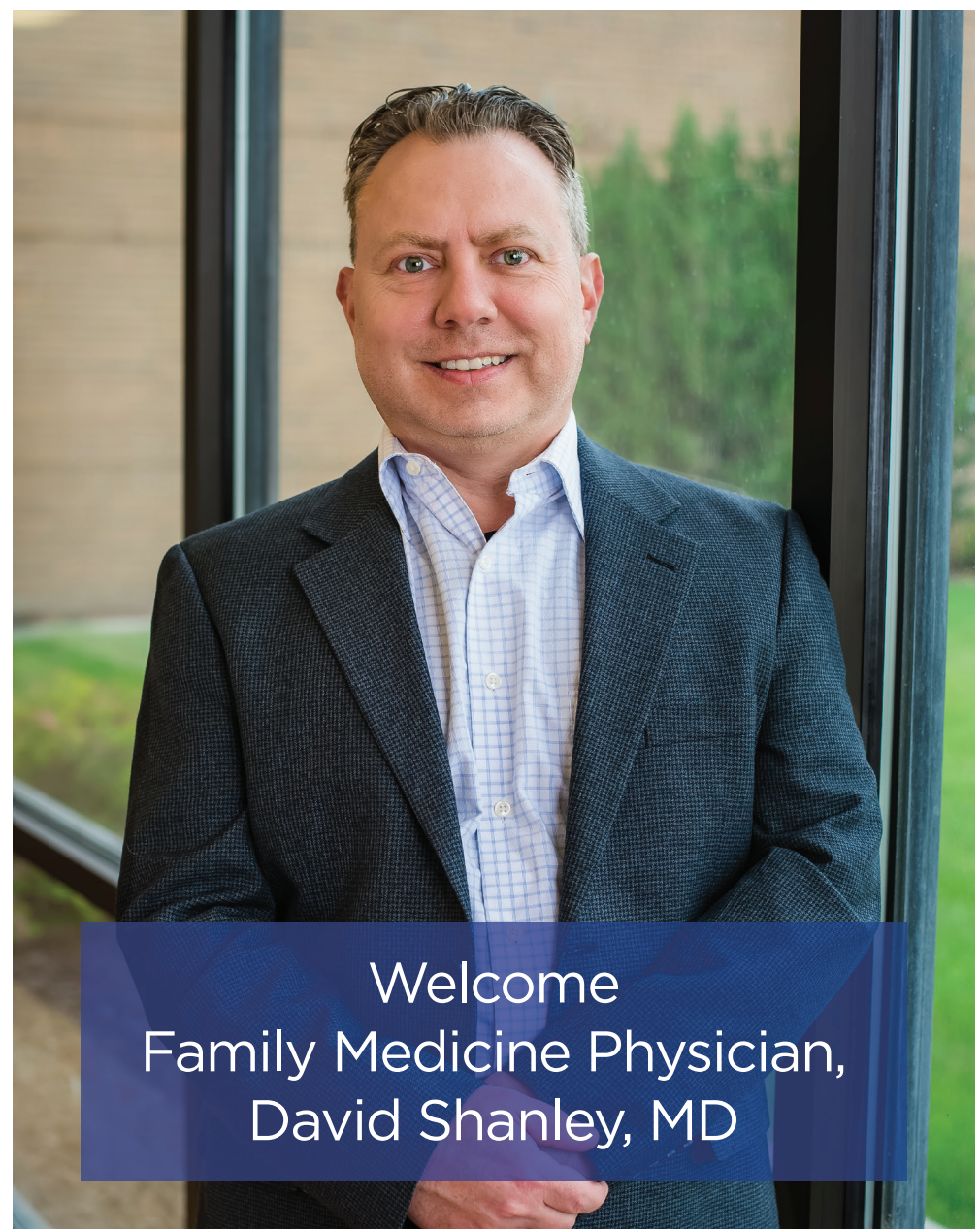
For more information visit [hermiston.or.us/water/](https://hermiston.or.us/water/) online-access or call the city at 541-567-5521.

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Welcome  
Family Medicine Physician,  
David Shanley, MD

Dr. Shanley is welcoming new patients, 6 months and older, for all their primary care needs at Good Shepherd's Primary Care Clinic. Dr. Shanley brings over 20 years of Family Medicine expertise, treating a large variety of different health conditions that will benefit his patients.

"I am happy to fulfill the need of primary care in Hermiston and the surrounding communities, and look forward to positively impacting the health and well-being for patients of all ages, through all stages of life."

- Dr. Shanley

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