

Center still serving seniors during shutdown

By JADE MCDOWELL
NEWS EDITOR

The Harkenrider Senior Activity Center may be “closed,” but its board members are still finding ways to serve seniors in Hermiston.

The senior center, which served in-house lunches five days a week before the pandemic, now provides meals twice a week by pick-up or delivery at its building at 255 N.E. Second St. behind First United Methodist Church.

In June, they provided 591 meals, and had provided 602 before the final meal date in July. Board secretary Judy Fordice said those totals are comparable to what the center was serving when meals were provided five days a week instead of two.

“The numbers are really up there,” she said.

Almost half the meals are delivered to homes by Meals on Wheels volunteers. Head cook Karen Blair said deliveries are “way, way up,” likely because many seniors in the community are afraid to leave their homes when they are at high risk for COVID-19 complications. She said they have also seen a significant number of new people who said they had not previously been aware of the service before they



Staff photo by Kathy Aney
Julie Rosner, of the Harkenrider Senior Activity Center, hands a lunch through the window of a pickup truck on Tuesday, August 4 as part of a twice-a-week program that takes the place of lunches at the center.

begin getting the *Hermiston Herald* for free in May.

Coordinating volunteers for delivering meals has been a struggle, board members said. They need people who are able to run the same route week after week, so that seniors aren't surprised and worried by a stranger on their doorstep, and so that the drivers can get to know the people on their route and notice when something is wrong.

“Some of our elders at home that we deliver to, our Meals on Wheels drivers are

the only contact they have for days, and our drivers are aware of that,” Fordice said.

Willard Fordice, Judy's husband, said as restaurants have done more take-out and delivery as well, the senior center has had a struggle getting enough disposable takeout containers to hold meals, particularly microwave-safe ones for the Meals on Wheels deliveries.

“That's our biggest problem right now,” he said.

When people were coming inside the senior center to eat or to participate in



Staff photo by Kathy Aney
Louis Ables and Karen Blair pack lunches in the Harkenrider Senior Activity Center kitchen for pickup by seniors who drive to the center's front entrance.

activities, they would often bring offerings of fresh produce from their gardens. Virginia Beebe said she has missed that.

“You can still drop off donations,” she said. “If we can't use it in a meal, we can still give it to people.”

Board members said some people have still been good about donating to the senior center, and area farms have donated potatoes, onions and watermelons.

When restaurants were first shut down in March, Nookie's Restaurant and Brewery donated a large amount of perishable food the restaurant just had delivered the day before but could no longer use. Other organizations

donated toilet paper during the toilet paper shortage so that they could offer a roll to Meals on Wheels recipients who needed them.

With lines longer than usual at the Hermiston Bottledrop, the board said they have also seen an increase in can and bottle donations, which helps fund the extra cost for takeout containers for meals.

Seniors can enter the building one at a time to borrow a large-print book or a puzzle from the center's collection.

“We're always in need of books,” Judy Fordice said.

Board members said the isolation of the pandemic has been difficult for senior center members who used to spend social time at the center playing cards, taking classes or making crafts together. Virginia Rome Garcia said many are passing the time at home with hobbies like quilting or genealogy work.

“They stay home for security and health reasons,” she said.

Running world rallies support for Hermiston grad Tommy Rivers Puzey

By JADE MCDOWELL
NEWS EDITOR

Runners all over the world are planning to “Run with Rivs” in solidarity with a former Hermiston graduate battling cancer.

Tommy Rivers Puzey, who grew up in Hermiston before making a name for himself in the long-distance running world, is in an intensive care unit in Scottsdale, Arizona, being treated for an aggressive form of cancer known as Primary Pulmonary NK T-Cell Lymphoma.

Participants in the Run with Rivs effort are encouraged to run, hike, swim, bike or otherwise log workout miles during Aug. 1-9, and then log their miles at runsignup.com/Race/AZ/Anywhereintheworld/RunwithRivs and make a donation in his name. People can also donate directly to a GoFundMe account at gofundme.com/f/Tommy-Rivers-Rest-Up to help cover his medical bills and his family's expenses. They have committed that any funds they do not need will go to support the Navajo Nation's battle with COVID-19.

Rivers Puzey's father, Kim Puzey, who still lives in Hermiston and is the general manager of the Port of Umatilla, said the amount of support that has flowed in from around the world since his son's hospitalization has been humbling.

“You can't help but be overwhelmed by the goodness of people,” he said.

Since Rivers Puzey became a professional endurance athlete, Puzey said, he has inspired hundreds of thousands of people in their own fitness journey.



Staff photo by Kathy Aney, File
Tommy Rivers Puzey, left, and Hayden Earl run together during the Butte Challenge 5K/10K Run in 2017 in Hermiston.

They virtually train with him through training courses on iFit on NordicTrack treadmills, or follow his career through Instagram and in running magazines. He has run in large marathons, such as the Las Vegas Marathon, multiple times, placed 16th in the Boston Marathon in 2017 and was an Olympic hopeful early this year until an injury cut that dream short.

On the GoFundMe page for Rivers Puzey, many of

the page's donors described how he had pushed them to be more fit, even though they had never met him in person.

“Tommy showed me how to enjoy running again through his iFit training programs,” one wrote. “He is a wealth of knowledge and a true joy with a free spirit that is infectious. Although I have never met him, I feel like I know him through our hours of early morning runs.”

Puzey said their family has been “blown away” by the number of people reaching out from all over the world with offers of help. He said what Rivers Puzey would want, and what his family wants, is for everyone to be the best, kindest person they can be by supporting others through positive energy and prayer, text messages, greeting cards, food or whatever else they might have to offer.

He wrote an update on Facebook on Monday, Aug. 3, stating that Rivers Puzey's oxygen levels were improving and that doctors were “incrementally and artfully reducing mechanical assistance and sedation.”

Rivers Puzey was originally admitted to the hospital in early July with severe respiratory symptoms, and he was eventually diagnosed with lymphoma on July 23.



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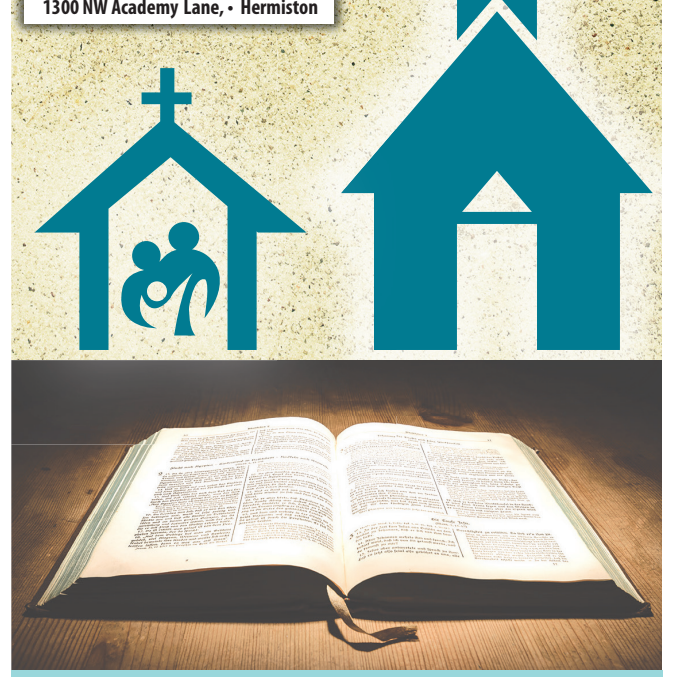
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PET OF THE WEEK

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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