

Car club cultivates project for Funland

By TAMMY MALGESINI
FOR THE HERMISTON HERALD

A group of car enthusiasts recently plowed forward, logging in more than 400 hours while restoring a circa 1955 tractor.

Larry Storment, past president of Hermiston Classics Car Club, said Larry Fetter, director of Hermiston Parks & Recreation, contacted him this past spring to see if the group was interested in the effort. Storment, who shared some pictures and presented the idea to fellow club members, said to his knowledge, the club had never taken on a tractor project. However, they were quickly on board.

“Nuts and bolts are nuts and bolts,” Storment said. “It doesn’t make a difference what it’s on when tearing something apart and putting it back together.”

Donated by Bill Elfering, a Umatilla County commissioner, the Massey-Harris #333 row-crop tractor



Photo contributed by Larry Fetter

Umatilla County Commissioner Bill Elfering shows off the restored 1955 tractor he is donating to the Funland playground project.

had been sitting idle on his property just east of Hermiston for the better part of 15 years. While he often pondered restoring it, Elfering decided to give it to the city of Hermiston for its Funland Playground project at Butte Park.

Fetter said the tractor will be among some “authentic pieces” that will provide a

connection to the region’s heritage in one of the sections of the park. The project replaces the community playground that was lost in a suspected arson fire in May 2019. Fetter said in addition to a farming/agriculture area, Funland will feature an Adventure Zone and a section highlighting the Wild West. It’s Fetter’s hope that

additional tractors will be donated in the future.

With the intention of tapping into the commissioner’s connections with area farmers, Fetter asked Elfering if he knew anyone that had “a cool old tractor.” Fetter didn’t need to look any further as Elfering offered up the Massey-Harris that his father, John, purchased brand new more than six decades ago.

“I grew up on that tractor,” Elfering said. “It was what I would call a stud of a tractor. It was top of the line.”

Elfering’s father, who was the Malheur County sheriff, raised mostly feed crops, including hay and corn, as well as some irrigated wheat. In addition, Elfering has fond memories of family holiday gatherings when his dad hitched up a cattle feeder as a makeshift sled.

“Everyone squealed and had a great time being pulled around,” Elfering said.

When his mother, Goldia, was clearing out the family’s farm implements after John died in the early 1990s, Elfering jumped at the chance to bring the tractor to Hermiston. Exposed to the elements, every time he prepared to fire it up it took several days of work to get it running. A decade later, Elfering decided to buy a new tractor but kept the Massey-Harris with hopes of eventually bringing it back to life by restoring it.

“When Larry came up with a need for it, I knew he had the people to do it,” Elfering said. “I thought it was the absolute best solution with what I wanted to do and what Larry needed.”

Storment said about 30 members of the car club put their time, energy and talents into the project. The group took the tractor apart, sandblasted and power washed it before reassembling, and then painting it. As part of the process, they

created some cover-ups and manufactured parts to ensure the equipment was child safe.

“It sat out in that field for a long time. We took a piece of machinery that didn’t look too good and brought it back to life,” Storment said. “I think it will be one of the biggest attractions of Funland park. I think the kids will really enjoy it.”

Fetter agreed, saying, “They just did a fantastic job. I’m quite thrilled to have it in our very cool park.”

Groundbreaking for the Funland Playground project was held July 29. While the completion date is dependent on fall weather, Fetter is hoping for an October completion date.

The community can still purchase engraved fence pickets, which are \$100 for individual and family names or \$250 for a business name. Orders and payment can be made online at bit.ly/funlandpicket.

IMESD offers virtual academy

By JADE MCDOWELL
NEWS EDITOR

The Intermountain Education Service District has partnered with its 18 school districts to create Virtual Academies, a new online option for students.

According to a news release, the online schooling option will be different than the comprehensive distance learning that schools will offer until students are able to be in the classroom with their teacher. The IMESD has hired teachers specifically for Virtual Academies, and students can use the academy all year even if their district returns to in-person classes.

“While many of our districts have already had these in place, the constantly changing needs, especially recently with school closures, of educating students have heightened the necessity to offer stronger online options,” Erin Lair, IMESD’s director of teaching and learning, said in a statement.

Students who enroll in the program will remain enrolled in their home district, and still be able to access the benefits of being in that district, including extracurricular activities and technical support.

The districts also benefit from keeping the student enrolled in their district by being able to retain the state funding for that student. Marie Shimer, director of educational services for Morrow County School District, said that helps the district financially, but the concept is also about following students who in some cases started kindergarten in the district all the way through to graduation.

“Of course, we don’t want our enrollment to decrease, we want our budgets to remain stable,” she said in the news release, “but also, these are our kids, our students and they live in our communities. As a public school, we are committed to their success.”

Hermiston School District is not a member of the IMESD, but families in other Eastern Oregon districts involved in the education service district can contact their school district for details about how to enroll their student in a virtual academy.



Hermiston School District releases school day outline

Districts ban transfers between schools

By JADE MCDOWELL AND ANTONIO SIERRA
STAFF WRITERS

As the start to the 2020-21 school year draws closer, Hermiston School District has released a “snapshot” of what families can expect in a typical school day.

School will start at 8:30 a.m. in order to give students time to get their materials organized and log in to their devices and learning platforms for the day, according to the snapshot. The first day of school is scheduled for Tuesday, Sept. 8.

From 8:30 a.m. until noon, students will engage in “teacher-facilitated learning.” That learning will be a mixture of live video interactions with teachers and other students, and watching prerecorded materials.

“Teacher-facilitated learning will be both recorded and live sessions to allow flexibility for your student and family,” Bryn Browning, assistant superintendent, said in a news release.

From there, students will be expected to take a lunch break from noon to 12:30 before beginning individualized learning until 2:30 p.m. That time period can be used for one-on-one or small group sessions with teachers, completing homework, collaborating with other students, reading, listening to music or “creating.”

Unlike the distance learning offered in the spring, according to a “Frequently Asked Questions” document released by the district, students will be given letter grades and attendance will be taken daily.

Individual schools and teachers will contact families with more detailed schedules for their student before the school year begins, the district stated, but they should “plan on the morning time for full online participation and some teacher interaction



Staff photo by Ben Lonergan

Hallways at Armand Larive Middle School and other schools throughout Hermiston will be empty to start the school year as the district looks to begin the school year with distance learning.

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Tricia Mooney, Hermiston School District Superintendent

as well in the afternoons.”

Transfers

Eastern Oregon school districts, including Hermiston, are offering families choices between enrolling in long-term virtual academies hosted by their district or temporarily participating in distance learning with a hope of transitioning the student into that

teacher’s physical classroom for in-person learning later in the year.

The districts have agreed to suspend most transfers between districts, however.

Banding together as a region, the 12 school districts of Umatilla and Morrow counties signed a pact that will freeze new transfers among these districts

for the 2020-21 school year.

The moratorium went into effect on the same day the letter was dated, although students who had transferred into districts prior to the moratorium would be allowed to stay at their schools.

“The (superinten-

dent of) Umatilla and Morrow (counties) have long shared a collaborative working relationship in the best interest of our families and students,” the Aug. 4 letter states. “We value school choice and worked very hard to honor our families’ decisions. For years, we accomplished this through the interdistrict transfer process.

“Unfortunately, the current COVID-19 pandemic has significantly impacted how our schools will operate this year. As we plan for the many challenges we face, we made the difficult decision to suspend the interdistrict transfer process for the 2020-2021 school year.”

In an email, Hermiston School District Superintendent Tricia Mooney wrote that her district actually saw a net loss from transfers, with more than 100 students transferring out than in the district.

Mooney further explained why the Hermiston School District joined the effort.

“We all need to work together to get our students back in school,” she wrote. “We need to be able to establish stable cohorts and provide consistency in instruction as we move through the school year. With the various sizes of districts in our counties, each may offer different opportunities for learning.”