

# Head Start gets new bus, furniture, supplies

By JADE MCDOWELL  
NEWS EDITOR

August was a good month for Umatilla Morrow County Head Start.

The organization added a shiny new school bus to its fleet at the end of the month. It also received semitruck loads of furniture, strollers, toys, sleeping mats, books and other child care supplies worth hundreds of thousands of dollars from Nike.

“We feel like it’s Christmas in August,” UMCHS director Maureen McGrath said.

The donation from Nike came after the sportswear giant announced it was closing its company-run child care centers in Portland and giving employees child care benefits to use off-site instead. The company is donating the materials that outfitted those classrooms to UMCHS.

On Friday, Aug. 28, the materials were stacked in the mechanical bays at Head Start’s new operations center on Airport Way in Hermiston. McGrath said staff still needed to go through everything and inventory it, but they were extremely excited about what they had seen so far. Some sup-



Staff photo by Jade McDowell

**Amy Willenberg, left, and Maureen McGrath of Umatilla Morrow County Head Start pose with the new school bus purchased by UMCHS in Hermiston.**

plies will outfit new classrooms Head Start is adding in places like their Boardman Early Learning Center, and others will be placed in UMCHS’s lending library for other area providers to use.

“It’s really going to help not just our centers, but other community child care providers,” McGrath said.

On an unrelated note, on Aug. 28 UMCHS also got a brand new school bus, paid for by grant dollars.

“This is brand spanking new, with the most up-to-date safety features. ... We are transporting the most precious cargo and so it

needs to be the safest it can get,” transportation manager Amy Willenberg said as she checked it out.

A new bus will need less maintenance than the fleet’s older buses, and provides better lighting and other new features. The bus is a short one, so that it can navigate some of the parking lots and dead ends that UMCHS’s longer buses can’t. It can also travel at highway speeds, which buses past a certain age are not allowed to do.

Aaron Treadwell, deputy director, said the bus cost about \$63,000 and UMCHS was lucky to get it only three



Staff photo by Jade McDowell

**Furniture, toys and other supplies donated by Nike sit ready for sorting at Umatilla County Morrow Head Start’s operations center on Airport Way in Hermiston.**

months after it was ordered from Northwest Bus Sales. He said school buses have a life span of about five to eight years, and there is a “huge” federally required process from start to finish as companies custom-build each bus for their clients.

“I wish it were like buying a car off the lot,” he said.

The bus is parked at UMCHS’s operations center in Hermiston, across the parking lot from the Airport Way Discovery Center, which houses three of Hermiston’s Head Start classrooms. Both buildings have been operational for about a year now, although

McGrath said they are still putting finishing touches on landscaping, and adding shade to the fenced outdoor play area.

UMCHS has Head Start, Early Head Start and Child Care Resource and Referral classrooms throughout Eastern Oregon. Crystal Umbarger, education manager, said the Airport Way Discovery Center is in a fun location because students can watch airplanes come and go at the Hermiston Municipal Airport across the road and can see frogs and other animals that they won’t find at UMCHS’s buildings in town.

“We call them our little scientists up here,” she said. Students will not immediately be returning to the discovery center in person for the 2020-21 season, however, due to COVID-19. McGrath said they have picked a nautical theme for the year and students will be starting out at “safe harbor” with online-only instruction that will be a mix of live interaction and prerecorded videos that families can watch on their own time.

Later, starting in about October, they plan to move up to hybrid models of learning known as “half mast” and “three quarters sail” with the goal of eventually returning to normal operations with “full sail ahead.”

On Aug. 28, teachers were in the classrooms putting together learning packets for students to pick up, consisting of crayons, scissors, pencils, glue, a pencil sharpener, a notebook, a dry erase marker and laminated writing practice sheets. Umbarger said even though students will be doing more via video this year, Head Start is still a valuable tool.

“It really helps empower those families,” she said.

## Youth Livestock Auction raises \$585,000

By JADE MCDOWELL  
NEWS EDITOR

The Umatilla County Fair may have looked a lot different this year, but area youths were still able to see rewards from their work raising an animal for the fair.

The Youth Livestock Auction, where 4-H and FFA students auction off their animals each year, raised a total of \$585,000 after factoring all bump and add-on dollars that individuals and businesses could continue to add after the live (virtual) auction was over.

That total was just below 2019’s record-breaking auction of \$615,000 according to a news release from the fair, but 2020 had only 208 lots compared with 265 lots in 2019.

“It is just amazing to see the support of our communities throughout the county and beyond,” sale superintendent Marie Linnell said in a statement.

According to the news release, the Umatilla County Fair’s sale committee reached out to previous buyers before this year’s auction, “and it was evident on those calls that the community was ready to support the kids.”

Some indicated that

Umatilla County Fair champions  
Market Swine Grand Champion: Broc Erickson (purchased by Elmer’s Irrigation)  
Market Swine Reserve Grand Champion: Lydia Vander Stelt (purchased by AgriNorthwest)  
Market Rabbit Grand Champion: Kaitlynn Bombela-Post (purchased by Mid-Columbia Producers)  
Market Steer Grand Champion: Alyson Terry (purchased by Helena Chemical)  
Market Steer Reserve Grand Champion: Blake Betz (purchased by Simplot Grower Solutions)  
Market Turkey Grand Champion: Carter Keys (purchased by Les Schwab Hermiston/Pendleton)  
Market Turkey Reserve Grand Champion: Tanner Miller (purchased by Gregory Smith & Company)  
Market Goat Grand Champion: Kelli Nelson (purchased by Threemile Canyon Farms)  
Market Goat Reserve Grand Champion: Quinn Duff (purchased by Copeland Show Calves)  
Market Sheep Grand Champion: Michael Rosselle (purchased by Nutrien Ag Solutions)  
Market Sheep Reserve Grand Champion: Gavin Bolen (purchased by Bank of Eastern Oregon)

COVID-19 had impacted their business so severely that they would not be able to commit as much money as usual to the auction, but others said they would commit more to make up for it. Some businesses placed bids online as they watched the live feed of the auction, while others gave proxy bidding power to the small group of sale staff who were there in person.

According to the news release, the bump program

— which gives people an opportunity to donate money to a pool used to increase the sale price of animals that sold for less — added a record \$65,000 to 169 of the 208 lots.

Photos of the animals and participating youths and other information can be found at [www.umatilla-countyfair.net/youth-livestock-auction](http://www.umatilla-countyfair.net/youth-livestock-auction) or the Umatilla County Fair Youth Livestock Auction Facebook page.

## American Legion donates earbuds to West Park School

HERMISTON HERALD

American Legion Post 37 in Hermiston purchased and donated 300 sets of earbud headphones for the students of West Park School in Hermiston.

The students will be able to use the earbuds with their district-issued Chromebooks while they are participating in distance learning this year.

“This school year may be difficult for families, teachers and students,” an email from the post stated. “The local American Legion Post hopes this will help enhance the student’s learning experience.”

William Hill of Post 37 presented the earbuds to West Park teacher Brenda Caldwell on Thursday, Aug. 28, 2020.

Hermiston School District is distributing Chromebooks and other school supplies to students throughout the week of Aug. 31 to Sept. 4.

Students have an assigned time for pickup based on the first letter of their last name, but any students unable to make their assigned pickup time can visit their school on Friday, Sept. 4, from

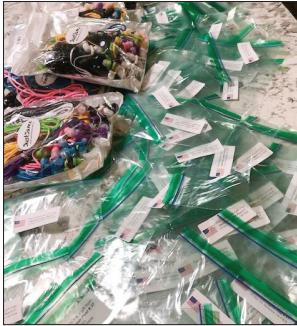


Photo contributed by American Legion Post 37

**William Hill, of the American Legion Post 37, presents a donation of 300 earbud headphones to West Park Elementary School teacher Brenda Caldwell.**

1-4 p.m. Elementary and middle school students will receive a package of school supplies with their Chromebook.

High school students are asked to purchase a spiral notebook, notebook paper, pencils, highlighters and a ruler.



## American Legion shows support for Hermiston Police Department

HERMISTON HERALD

At a recent meeting of the Hermiston American Legion Post 37, a motion to honor the Hermiston Police Department was presented, seconded, and unanimously carried with very little discussion, according to an email from the post.

“Due to the recent events taking place in our society, we felt it necessary to

meet with you and display our support,” Post Chaplain Aaron Wetterling said in a statement.

Shift changes created a minor problem, so it was necessary to have two ceremonies to meet all of the officers, the first on Friday, Aug. 28, and the second, on Monday, Aug. 31, both at 6 p.m. Following the opening remarks each officer was presented with

a Certificate of Appreciation and a small monetary gift to be shared with their families.

Upon receiving their envelopes each officer was greeted with a warm handshake and a personal “thank you” from American Legion members. Before dismissing, Legion members surrounded the officers and offered a prayer of protection for them.

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