

**Holiday:**

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it's not there anymore, but they'll adjust, I suppose."

After the tree is done serving its purpose downtown, it will be chopped up for firewood and donated to the Agape House.

Although people are asked to watch the Christmas tree lighting virtually, the Hermiston Downtown District will still hold its First Thursday event. Downtown merchants will have sales for Ladies' Day from 9 a.m. to 8 p.m. on Dec. 3.

**Festival of Lights**

Out at the Eastern Oregon Trade and Event Center on the south end of Hermiston, the city-owned facility is offering its own holiday cheer this year with the rebirth of the Festival of Lights.

When the Umatilla County Fair was located on Orchard Avenue, the fairgrounds there used to be turned into a winter wonderland of lights and decorations, complete with vendors and other activities, each December. The event was eventually canceled in 2013 due to lack of volunteers.

The tradition has been revived this year. People can drive through the new fairgrounds at EOTEC, 1705 E. Airport Road, to see the light displays from 5-10 p.m. Thursdays and Sundays, and 5-11 p.m. Fridays and Saturdays. EOTEC General Manager Al Davis said it should take people about 15 minutes to drive through.

Davis said they originally set the lights up for people to walk through, but made changes when the state initially went into a two-week "freeze" on gatherings for COVID-19.



Ben Lonergan/Hermiston Herald  
**A Christmas tree is raised into position on Festival Street in Hermiston on Monday, Nov. 30, 2020.**

"We've had to adjust on the fly," Davis said.

Entrance is by donation, with half the donations benefiting Rotary Club and the other half going to various nonprofits and toward more lights for future Festival of Lights events. Davis said they were able to reuse a few of the decorations from the original Festival of Lights, but most of the lights are brand new, and they hope each year to use proceeds from the previous year to add to the collection, eventually covering all 60 acres at EOTEC.

"People don't realize, Christmas lights are expensive," he said.

**Other events**

Some other annual Christmas events will also go on. While the fate of Pancakes with Santa is still undecided, the annual Holiday Christmas Bazaar will take place Saturday, Dec. 5, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

In light of COVID-19 safety, the bazaar will take place outdoors in the parking lot of the Hermiston Community Center, 415 S. Highway 395, with social distancing measures in place.

Also at the community center parking lot is the annual Kiwanis Club tree sale. The trees are available on Fridays and Saturdays from 9 a.m. to 8 p.m. and the rest of the week from noon



Ben Lonergan/Hermiston Herald/East Oregonian  
**The Hermiston Christmas tree crosses Highway 395 in Hermiston on its brief journey to Festival Street on Monday, Nov. 30, 2020.**

to 8 p.m. The club has 400 trees available, and the sale will end when they are gone. Trees are Douglas firs, Grand firs and Noble firs from 5 to 8 feet tall, starting at \$30.

Proceeds benefit Kiwanis Club projects, including supplies for foster children, youth scholarships, Doernbecher Children's Hospital, highway cleanups and more.

The Kiwanis Club and Good Shepherd Community Health have canceled the Festival of the Trees this year, but are still raising money for a good cause. They solicited donations for the Hermiston Police Department's Christmas Express, which provides boxes of food and gifts for families in need. According to a news release they will donate about \$3,000 to Christmas Express "through the generous support of several businesses."

As part of that effort, Kiwanis Club is going to virtually auction off a tree, which is on display

downtown at Two96Main, located at 296 Main St. A link to bid on the tree is here: [32auctions.com/kiwanischristmastree](https://32auctions.com/kiwanischristmastree).

Residents can still drop off nonperishable food for Christmas Express in the community center parking lot until Dec. 11 (except for Sunday, Dec. 6) from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. No glass containers.

The Hermiston Parks and Recreation Department and Hermiston Library are offering a variety of holiday activities throughout the month. Adults can pick up a Christmas Mouse craft kit from the library.

The parks department is offering "Elf of the Shelf" kits (elf not included) with ideas and activities for those who participate in that tradition. Residents can also order a "Christmas at home" kit by Dec. 4 with ornament crafts, coloring pages, a family game and a letter to Santa activity. The department is collecting recommendations of the best Christmas

lights in Umatilla County for a map it plans to publish. For more information about parks and recreation holiday offerings, visit the department's Facebook page or call 541-667-5018.

**Other cities**

In Boardman, the chamber of commerce is advertising that its annual Christmas tree lighting will be broadcast live on its Facebook page on Saturday, Dec. 5, from 6-7 p.m.

After the tree is lit, families and individuals will be able to visit the SAGE Center, 101 Olsen Road, to drive through and see the tree and light show. The SAGE Center has announced it is canceling its annual Winter Market bazaar.

The Echo Toy Run will still take place on Dec. 5 as well, with motorcyclists driving toys from downtown Echo to Good Shepherd Medical Center in Hermiston merely asked to not gather together at the drop-off site (see page A6 for more details).

**Dinner:**

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kitchen crew began cooking 11 days before Thanksgiving and prepared 68, 20- to 24-pound turkeys, 36 cases of mashed potatoes, 30 cases of corn and 1,500 dinner rolls, among numerous other dishes.

"It's rewarding in its own way," she said. "It's rewarding to be able to see so many people working hard and to be able to feed so many people."

According to Cassens, most of the unserved meals will be donated to local charities.

Cassens, who has helped with the dinner for the last 18 years, said the kitchen team spent a lot of time thinking about how to package the meals so that people wouldn't run into issues reheating them.

"We wanted to put the gravy in with the rest of the food, but the containers for it weren't microwavable," said Cassens. "We put together a tray that people could just microwave and a separate bag of sides."

For those unable to come



Ben Lonergan/Hermiston Herald  
**Magnolia Castaneda, left, and Pricillamarie Lang hand out Thanksgiving meals during the drive-thru Community Fellowship Dinner in Hermiston on Thursday, Nov. 26, 2020.**

pick up meals themselves, Gary Humphreys, the Community Fellowship Dinner

board chairman, oversaw the scheduling and delivery of roughly 200 meals to

area residents. "It went pretty well," he said. "It got a bit slow in the



Ben Lonergan/East Oregonian  
**Cars pass through the drive-thru Community Fellowship Dinner at Hermiston High School in Hermiston on Thursday, Nov. 26, 2020.**

middle before picking up at the end."

Humphreys has been a part of the Community Fellowship Dinner since his mother dragged him along in 1985, and the idea stuck. Over the years, Humphreys kept coming back and brought his family on board to help out.

While Humphreys and Cassen have been long-time volunteers, the limits on travel and gathering size led John and Nancy Lauck, who usually travel out of the area for the holidays, to come and help volunteer at the Community Fellowship Dinner.

"We've always admired the event and with the inability to travel this year, it seemed like the perfect time to lend a hand," said Nancy Lauck. "It's wonderful to get the chance to help. It's rewarding and helps people out."

The Hermiston High School football team and a group of missionaries from The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints also donated time to volunteer to help make sure the event went off without a hitch.

"We're really grateful to both groups for all of their help and hard work," Humphreys said.



Ben Lonergan/Hermiston Herald  
**John and Nancy Lauck hand out Thanksgiving meals to people during the Community Fellowship Dinner in Hermiston on Thursday, Nov. 26, 2020.**

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