

UPDATES

Hermiston students to return to full time

HERMISTON HERALD

Hermiston School District announced on Tuesday, March 23, that all students will return to in-person classes full time, five days a week starting April 13.

The announcement, which came shortly before the *Hermiston Herald* went to print, stated the change was made possible by the unexpected update to the state's Safe Schools, Ready Learners safety rules on Monday, March 22, that allowed districts to shrink the space between students' desks from 6 feet to 3 feet.

Students will have school off on April 12 to allow staff to prepare. When they return, elementary students will attend from 7:55 a.m. to 2:30 p.m., with a 1:45 pm release on Wednesdays. Middle school students will attend from 8:30 a.m. to 3:18 p.m., with a 9:15 a.m. start on Wednesdays. High school students will go from 8:25 a.m. to 3:25 p.m., with a 9:10 a.m. start on Wednesdays.

"This is welcome news, following updated federal guidance," Superintendent Tricia Mooney said in a statement. "I want to express my gratitude for the community's support and for everyone doing their part to help keep each other safe and reduce case counts."

On March 23, Gov. Kate Brown also announced Umatilla County will remain at the high risk level of restrictions for COVID-19 for another two weeks and Morrow County will remain at low risk.

Oregon Health Authority assesses COVID-19 cases and test positivity every 14 days to determine the level of restrictions for each county. The risk levels determine the capacity allowed for indoor dining establishments, gyms, churches, event centers and other gathering places.



Ben Lonergan/Hermiston Herald
Darrell "Pete" Rollins poses with his Eastern Oregon Recovery Center certificate of completion for a portrait at McKenzie Park in Hermiston on Tuesday, March 23, 2021.

Road to recovery

Eastern Oregon Recovery Center helps people beat addictions

By JADE MCDOWELL
NEWS EDITOR

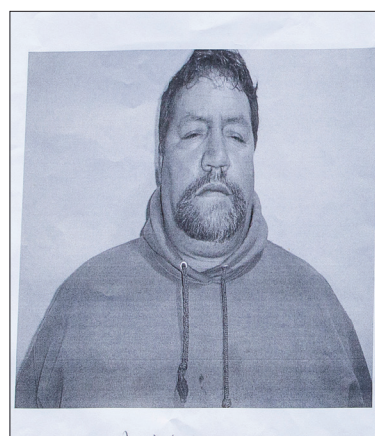
When Darrell "Pete" Rollins entered inpatient treatment for addiction at Eastern Oregon Recovery Center in Pendleton, he didn't think anything counselors there had to teach him would work.

"I packed my stuff every day for the first 30 days, wanting to leave," the Hermiston man said.

One day, he said, he broke the rules of the center and was asked to give up his cellphone for a week. He asked for time to think about it and called his adult son, hoping his son would be outraged on his behalf and come and get him. Instead, his son asked him if he had really broken the rules, and when he said yes, told him he needed to own up to his mistake. So he handed over his phone, and in the process, decided to embrace the recovery program instead of resisting it.

"When I gave up my phone, that was the best thing I ever did," he said.

There were still setbacks, after that. He almost left when his younger brother was killed in a motorcycle accident, before deciding his brother would have cared



Darrell Rollins/Contributed Photo
A printed photograph of Darrell Rollins shows his condition prior to his treatment at Eastern Oregon Recovery Center in October 2020.

more about him getting clean than attending his funeral. But Rollins graduated from the recovery center in February and said he hasn't used drugs since.

He's thrilled. He says he's happier, healthier and has a better relationship with his children. He enjoys more activities, and has a steady job.

"I wish I had done this 35 years ago," he said. "The world has opened up to me."

Recovery Resources

Umatilla County Human Services: 541-564-9390
Eastern Oregon Detoxification Center: 541-278-2558
Eastern Oregon Recovery Center: 541-278-2558 ext. 102
Power House Residential Drug Treatment Center: 541-567-2593
New Horizons: 541-289-0190
Grande Ronde Recovery Center: 541-663-4104
National Substance Abuse and Mental Health hotline: 1-800-662-4357

He has a lot of people to thank — his child's pediatrician, to whom he confided his drug problem. His primary care physician. The people at Umatilla County Human Services, who helped get him into treatment and have supported him in the outpatient phase. His probation officer. Those who attend Narcotics Anonymous and Alcoholics Anonymous meetings with him. His boss at Bud Rich Potato, who held his job for him while he was in treatment. He said he couldn't have done it without his children, either.

"I'm really fortunate my kids never turned their back on me," he said. "That was my support."

He also credits the staff at Eastern Oregon Recovery Center for their help. He said they managed to "teach an old dog new tricks" and

could see through his excuses and get to the heart of the problem.

"I couldn't believe the love and compassion they had for someone like me," he said.

While staff can't talk about individual patients' treatment, employees of EORC can talk about the facility in general. Eastern Oregon Recovery Center began as Eastern Oregon Alcoholism Foundation in 1960. The overarching organization includes the 36-bed inpatient treatment center for men and women, the Eastern Oregon Detoxification Center and transitional housing. Located in Pendleton, it serves people throughout the state who are seeking treatment for addiction.

Kati Jokinen, clinical supervisor for the recovery center, said

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Ben Lonergan/Hermiston Herald
Rafael Romero inserts lists of COVID-19 and workplace safety information into packages of food for farmworkers at New Horizons in Hermiston on Friday, March 12, 2021.

Keeping families fed

Hermiston groups bring food and other supplies to thousands of farmworkers

By BRYCE DOLE
STAFF WRITER

Wences Dominguez makes a little more than \$400 each week pruning grapes in the sprawling fields around Hermiston — \$350 of which he gives to his family.

He sends about \$300 to his mother, wife and sons back home in Michoacán, Mexico, where he's been coming to and from for the past 23 years, while searching for a better future. In his first years working in the United States, he used all the money he made to build his family's home.

The remaining \$50 he gives to

his daughter. Before he came to Hermiston over two years ago, he hadn't seen her for seven years. He couldn't get a green card, he said.

"I felt very happy," he said of the first time he saw her again.

She has two daughters, and when the pandemic began to spread through nearby agricultural areas in the summer, they were the reason he worked hard to protect himself from COVID-19.

"Always I take care," he said through a translator. "Always I have my mask. For my kids."

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