



Ben Lonergan/Hermiston Herald, File

A sign from the Hermiston Chamber of Commerce along East Main Street in Hermiston advises shoppers that businesses are open on Nov. 20, 2020.

April brings new grant opportunities for businesses affected by pandemic

By JADE MCDOWELL
NEWS EDITOR

State and federal COVID-19 relief legislation will present more grant opportunities to businesses in April.

The Restaurant Revitalization Fund is a \$28.6 billion grant fund created by the American Rescue Plan, the latest federal stimulus package. The Small Business Administration has not named a specific date yet for applications to begin, but has said it expects to open the application period sometime in April.

According to the SBA, the fund will provide tax-free federal grants to restaurants, bars, food trucks and other eateries to cover their losses caused by COVID-19 and related restrictions since February 2020. The list of eligible items for the grant money to be spent on includes payroll, rent or mortgage, utilities, food and beverages, cleaning supplies, paid sick leave and expenses related to creating outdoor dining areas. Publicly traded companies or those with more than 20 restaurants are not eligible.

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce is urging restaurant owners to prepare now, before the grant period opens, by registering with the federal System of Award Management and preparing documentation of gross revenues for 2019 compared to 2020. More information can be found at restaurantsact.com.

On April 8, the Small Business Administration

also expects to open applications for the Shuttered Venue Operators grant, for venues affected by COVID-19.

Qualifying entities include event venue operators, theatrical producers, live performing arts organizations, movie theaters, museums and more. For organizations in operation before January 2019, grant awards will be for 45% of gross revenues from 2019 or \$10 million, whatever is less. More information is available at sba.gov/funding-programs/loans/covid-19-relief-options/shuttered-venue-operators-grant.

Business Oregon just closed its first round of applications for the Commercial Rent Relief Grant, but expects to open up another application period in mid-April. The grant is available to help commercial landlords and small business owners by providing rent money for tenants with fewer than 100 employees that have fallen behind on their rent payments because of the pandemic.

More information can be found at oregon4biz.com/Coronavirus-Information/CRR.

Locally, chambers of commerce, the Umatilla Electric Cooperative Business Resource Center in Hermiston and the Blue Mountain Community College's Small Business Development Center can provide additional information to area businesses interested in pursuing state and federal grants.

Deadly virus found in Oregon, Idaho rabbits

By GEORGE PLAVERN
CAPITAL PRESS

Oregon wildlife and agriculture officials have confirmed the presence of a deadly virus in feral domestic rabbits in a Portland suburb, sparking concerns the disease could spread to wild rabbits in Oregon.

On March 14, the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife received a report that eight domestic or feral rabbits were found dead in Milwaukie.

Ryan Scholz, state veterinarian for the Oregon Department of Agriculture, was notified and had one of the rabbit carcasses delivered to Oregon State University for testing. Results came back positive for Rabbit Hemorrhagic Disease Virus 2 on March 24.

The disease does not pose a risk to humans, but is highly contagious among rabbits and can spread through contact with other infected animals or contaminated food and water, causing acute illness or sudden death.

"At this point, we are confident that all eight of the rabbits died from RHDV2, and the virus has taken hold in the feral rabbit population," Scholz said.

ODA and ODFW are asking the public to report any dead rabbits as the agencies track the virus by calling 1-800-347-7028 or visiting www.oda.direct/RHD.

HELP PREVENT SPREAD

The Oregon Department of Agriculture recommends several steps to prevent the spread of Rabbit Hemorrhagic Disease:

- Wash and disinfect hands, clothing, gloves, footwear, cages and equipment between handling rabbits from different sources.
- Quarantine new rabbits away from existing ones for 30 days.
- Keep pet rabbits inside to avoid exposure.
- Immediately contact ODA if you suspect RHD or have sick or freshly dead rabbits.
- If you have animals not freshly dead, double plastic bag them and dispose of in a landfill.

Rabbit Hemorrhagic Disease was also recently discovered in two wild jackrabbits in Ada County, Idaho, southwest of the Boise Airport.

There is no treatment, cure or vaccine for the disease. Symptoms in rabbits may include fever, lethargy, lack of appetite, lack of coordination, excitement or nervousness, difficulty breathing, congested membranes around the eyes or bloody, frothy nasal discharge at death.



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New Chamber Office Hours:
Monday-Friday 8:30am-4:30pm
Starting April 1st



Kristina Olivas Chosen as Chamber Chief Executive Officer



The Greater Hermiston Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors is pleased to announce that Kristina Olivas of Hermiston has been selected as the Chamber's Chief Executive Officer. Olivas will begin work March 30.

As CEO, Olivas will lead interactions with the Chamber's 400+ members, plan events and activities, coordinate the various Chamber committees and manage efforts to develop a new Chamber office and workforce development center at South Highway 395 and East Evelyn Avenue.

Olivas has spent the past five years as Human Resources Office and Training Manager at the Walmart Distribution Center. Among her duties leading an HR department, she provided counseling, coaching and policy leadership to nearly 1,000 employees. She previously worked as a purchasing and maintenance planning manager at Oregon Potato Company in Boardman and as a sales associate at Wilcox Furniture.

Olivas brings the experience, skills and personality needed to connect with a culturally diverse and growing community, said Annette Kirkpatrick, Chamber board president. "We are impressed with Kristina's energy, work history and love of community," Kirkpatrick said, "She has a natural ability to listen and connect with others. We expect Kristina to not only continue our successful programs, but to work with members, partners and community stakeholders to bring our Chamber to a new level of service."

Hermiston born and raised, bilingual in Spanish and English, mother of two-teenaged daughters and a young son, Olivas enjoys spending time with family and exploring the Pacific Northwest.

For work, "My career goal as always been to develop professional and personal relationships while building the Community I love," Olivas said. "I feel excitement and pride, I'm so proud to be on the front lines in representing the businesses of Hermiston." Olivas was chosen by the Chamber Board of Directors to fill the position vacated by Kim Rill, who left in February for a workforce development job.

Members can call the Chamber office to schedule a time on the radio to share about your business!

BUSINESS CONNECTION
Tuesdays at 8:30am KOHU 1360AM

VISIT OUR WEBSITE FOR COVID-19 BUSINESS RESOURCES

WWW.HERMISTONCHAMBER.COM

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