

Community garden gets ready for planting season

By JADE MCDOWELL
NEWS EDITOR

The Lovin' Spadefuls Community Garden in Hermiston was abuzz with more than just the insects on Saturday, April 17, as volunteers had a work party to get the garden in shape.

On-site registration for plots at the garden, available on a first-come-first-served basis for \$10 for the season, will be Friday, April 30, from 4-7 p.m. and Saturday, May 1, from 9 a.m. to noon. The garden is located on the Elm Street side of the Good Shepherd Health Care System campus. Plots still available after the on-site registration days will be available for signup at the Umatilla Morrow Head Start/WIC offices.

As the garden celebrates its 10-year anniversary this summer, it boasts new amenities, including 10 raised plots. Garden director Chelle Hankinson said the raised beds, lifted up a few feet off the ground by wooden boxes, are geared toward elderly gardeners and those with disabilities that make it difficult for them to kneel in the dirt.

"We're helping every demographic we can," she said.

On April 17, volunteers were using wood stain to help protect the newly constructed raised beds, while others were putting together the irrigation systems for them. Other volunteers had



Uppa Shakya, left, and her husband Suva Shakya paint wood stain on the new raised beds at Lovin' Spadefuls Community Garden in Hermiston on Saturday, April 17, 2021.

already worked to lay out the painted bricks that mark off each plot, and painted buckets with colorful inspirational messages.

Husband and wife Suva and Uppa Shakya were working together to spread wood stain over one of the raised beds.

"We've been with the garden since the beginning," Suva said. "Our daughter running around over there was in her belly when we started."

Uppa said they enjoy bringing their children to the garden each summer to teach them how to grow their own food. The family

also enjoys the fresh produce they receive from it all summer, including tomatoes, beans, okra, garlic, onions and melons.

As the garden prepares to open for the season, Hankinson said the community continues to be incredibly generous.

The new raised beds were paid for by a \$4,800 grant from the Good Shepherd Community Health Foundation plus other private donations, including lumber from Home Depot and irrigation parts from Elmer's Irrigation.

Hankinson said they plan to create a small oasis of

grass, flowers and a bench in the center of the garden this year for people to rest from weeding or planting.

Over the years the garden has also added a security camera system, a shed with tools for garden members to use, an improved irrigation system, a greenhouse, new signs and other amenities. The Master Gardeners program has a plot with culinary herbs that this year will include additional signs about how to grow and use the herbs.

"I just keep reaching for the stars, and they just keep falling into my hands," Hankinson said.

Umatilla Museum preparing to reopen

By JADE MCDOWELL
NEWS EDITOR

After more than a year of closure, the Umatilla Museum is preparing to reopen.

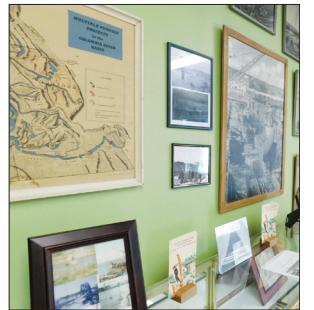
Unless Umatilla County gets shut down with additional COVID-19 restrictions, board member Judy Simmons said, the museum plans to hold a grand reopening on Saturday, May 8. The museum closed during the initial COVID-19 shutdowns in spring 2020 and hasn't been open to the public since that time.

Simmons said volunteers for the museum will hold a cleaning party on Saturday, April 24, to dust shelves and do other things needed to prepare.

The museum used to have a paid employee, but no longer does. Simmons said the Umatilla Historical Society, which runs the museum, is in need of volunteers who can work shifts during the museum's hours, Thursday through Saturday from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

"Having an employee here really helped with getting volunteers," she said. "Now we're going to solely rely on volunteers."

The museum features a variety of displays, including sections on the Native American tribes that first settled the area, the McNary Dam, the railroad, pioneer household items and antique farm equipment. The building was once the Umatilla city hall



Jade McDowell/Hermiston Herald

Pictures and maps related to construction of the McNary Dam line the walls of the Umatilla Museum.

and jail, and Simmons said the most popular room is the old jail cells.

"People like that because they step inside and shut the door and get a picture of themselves in jail," she said.

Staff, students and alumni of Umatilla School District are working on a new room, featuring items from the school district's past and a display about the district's robotics teams. The historical society also filmed interviews with some of Umatilla's oldest residents, which Simmons said they plan to show on a television after the videos are done being edited.

The Umatilla Museum, 911 Sixth St., has a wheelchair-accessible side entrance for those who aren't able to make it up the step to the main entrance. People interested in volunteering for the museum or donating Umatilla-specific artifacts can contact Simmons at 541-571-8780 or j205simmons@gmail.com.



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