



DOG DAYS

Hermiston Bark Park holds 'grand unleashing'

By JADE MCDOWELL
NEWS EDITOR

June Rosenberg has made a lot of friends the past few weeks at the Hermiston Bark Park. Some of them have two legs, but most of them have four.

"Amanda and I have been meeting all of these dogs, and we know all these dogs' names but not the names of the people," she said.

Amanda Woodlee is one of the human friends Rosenberg has made since she began bringing Delilah Rose, her white Labradoodle, to the new dog park. While the park had its "grand unleashing" on Friday, April 30, some members of the public have been using it for a few weeks already after the fence went up.

Rosenberg said the large, fenced area at Butte Park, where dogs can run off leash, is a great way to socialize dogs and their owners. She said Delilah Rose loves it when other dogs are available to run around with.

"We come just about every day," she said. "It's so handy."

Woodlee brought Bowser, her family's stocky brown and white rescue dog, to the grand opening, and watched him play with the other dogs as they frolicked through the grass, running and rolling around and sniffing each other.

"It gets the energy out," she said.

The Hermiston Bark Park spans about 37,000 square feet at Butte Park, next to the splash park area. A large, fenced-off area is designated

for large dogs, while a smaller area is for small dogs.

Hermiston Parks and Recreation staff have made some improvements to the park other than the fence, including a concrete entry area and a stand that holds clean-up bags for waste. But Director Larry Fetter said some improvements are still on back order, including additional signs, benches and trash cans.

The department also plans to add a kiosk by the front gate, where people will be able to hang lost dog posters and other announcements.

"It's anything related — dog training, dog sitting. I don't know if we have dog walkers in town," Fetter said.

Shortly before the ribbon was cut at the park, Fetter said a dog park was something he had been hoping to bring to Hermiston for years.

"This project has been in the works for about 10 years," he said. "We looked at a lot of locations and I think we got a winner here."

The event included a demonstration by Paws Off Obedience, which handles the dog obedience trainings sponsored by the parks department each year, and bags of treats for dogs and humans alike.

Other park projects

The new dog park is near the new Funland Playground, still under construction.

The parks department had

See Dog Park, Page A8



Ben Lonergan/Hermiston Herald

A group of children helps cut the ribbon for the "grand unleashing" of the the Hermiston Bark Park on Friday, April 30, 2021.



Ben Lonergan/Hermiston Herald

Bowie explores the new Hermiston Bark Park during its "grand unleashing" on Friday, April 30, 2021.

Low vaccination rates prompt concerns

Umatilla County officials decry political overtones associated with vaccines

By BRYCE DOLE
STAFF WRITER

Umatilla County Commissioner John Shafer wants to send a clear message — he's a Republican man choosing to get vaccinated against COVID-19.

In response to the county's low vaccine rates, officials recently convened to discuss new ways that they could encourage residents to get a shot. Shafer, who has voiced frustration in the past regarding the politicization of vaccines, volunteered to endorse the shot by having a photo taken of him while getting his second jab.

"I want people to know — don't be afraid of the vaccine," he said. "I'm getting it. And one of the things is that the Republican males seem to be one of the worst at getting vaccinated."

Shafer and Umatilla County Commissioner George Murdock, each of whom are Republicans, decry the political overtones associated with vaccines. They say declining demand for shots alongside rising cases are hindering the county's progress during the pandemic, and that political division is playing a role.

"At no time in our history has a vaccine been this political," Shafer said. "And, for the life of me, I can't figure out why. I don't know if some

people are thinking that it could be because a Democratic governor and a Democratic president are pushing this. But I keep thinking, even President Trump was saying, 'Get vaccinated. I did.'"

Murdock says COVID-19 vaccinations "should have nothing to do with political party," adding, "I would not trust my health to partisan politics."

Murdock says that he and Commissioner Dan Dorran buck the national trends, saying "it's not universal."

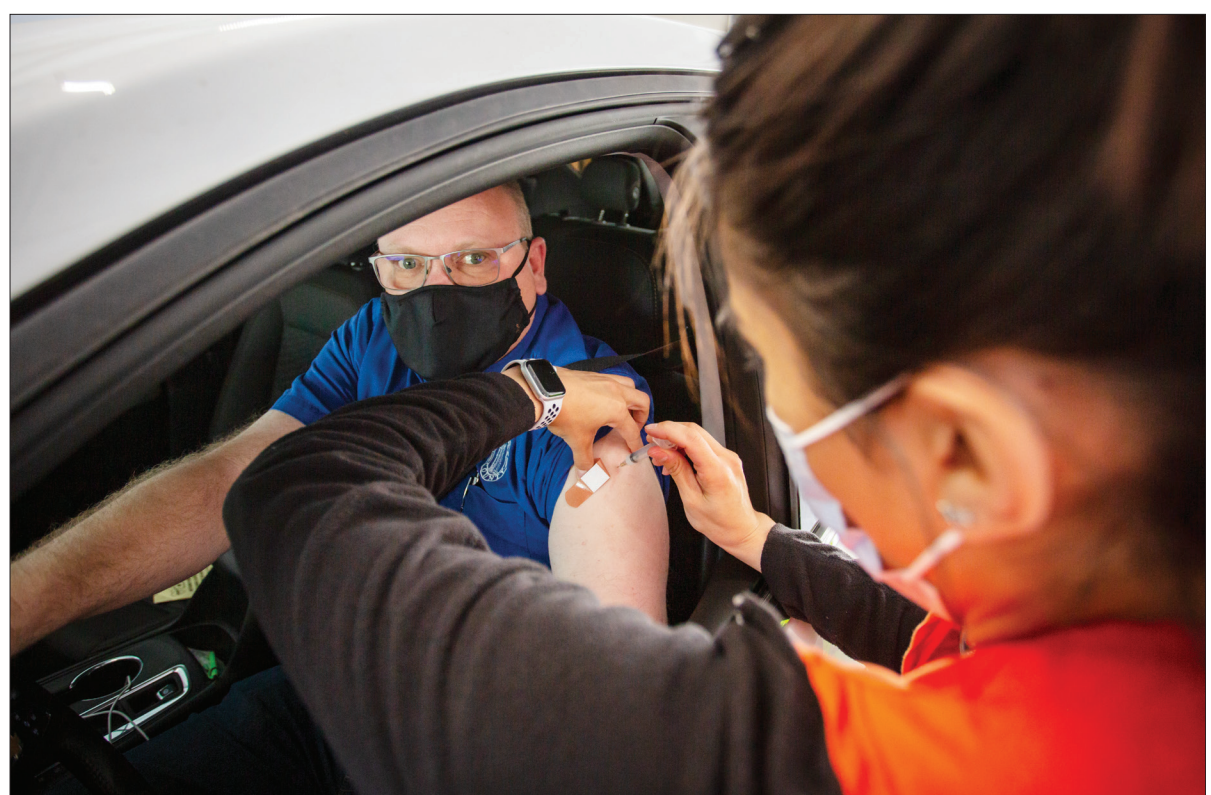
"The polling seems to show older Republican men seem to be the group who least likely want to get the vaccination," Murdock said. "But I'm an absolute contrast to that. I'm old, I'm a Republican and I couldn't wait to get mine fast enough."

The notion that Republicans are largely declining vaccines in the county echoes national trends that critics say are driven by right-wing pundits who flout coronavirus precautions as a Democratic effort to undermine the party and impinge on civil liberties.

Poll: Vaccination rates lag in areas that supported Trump

A recent national poll conducted by Monmouth University found nearly 2 in 5 Republicans said they

See Vaccines, Page A8



Ben Lonergan/Hermiston Herald

Umatilla County Commissioner John Shafer receives his second dose of the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine from registered nurse Kelsi Reyes during a vaccination event in Pendleton on Friday, April 30, 2021.

"I WANT OUR COUNTY TO BE OPEN. I DON'T WANT ANY RESTRICTIONS IN PLACE BECAUSE OF OUR NUMBERS. AND THE WAY TO DO THAT IS THE VACCINE."

Umatilla County Commissioner John Shafer

INSIDE

A3 ▶ Morrow and Umatilla counties declare droughts, ask for aid

A6 ▶ Registrations are open for the annual A.C.E. Car Club Auto Show in Echo

A7 ▶ Perennial Wind Chaser Station project outside Hermiston may have an interested buyer

A9 ▶ I Love My City group spruces up downtown Hermiston