



Ben Lonergan/Hermiston Herald

The sun sets over the crowd Saturday, Aug. 7, 2021, along East Main Street, Hermiston, during the annual Umatilla County Fair Kick-Off Parade.

Fair

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On Aug. 12, the day will begin with a series of swine, cattle, sheep and small animal showmanship competitions in the barns and pavilions. Attendees can see magicians, jugglers and a circus in various

places throughout the fair. That night, the rock and roll band Everclear will perform on the Wildhorse Main Stage at 9 p.m.

The weeklong festivities will ramp up on Aug. 13 with more 4-H/FFA showings in the Burns Pavilion in the morning and master showmanship competition announced at 6 p.m. A group of Latino musicians will take to Wildhorse Main Stage from 8 p.m. to 1 a.m. that night. Those performers include Tierra Cali, Diana Reyes, Alfa 7 and Fortaleza De Tierra Caliente.

The final day of the fair will begin with the youth livestock auction at the Burns Pavilion at 10 a.m., and a cutest baby contest at the Les Schwab stage at that same time. The carnival opens at noon instead of 2 p.m. A Hermiston watermelon seed spitting competition takes place at the Les Schwab Stage at 2 p.m., and at 4:10 p.m., the Steppin' Country Dance Club from Walla Walla takes the same stage. The Umatilla County Fair concludes with country, blues and rockstar Frankie Ballard at the Wildhorse Mainstage at 9 p.m.

For a more detailed fair schedule, go to www.umatillacountyfair.net/fair-schedule.
— Staff writer Bryce Dole contributed to this feature.

Splash:

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sion than arresting the children of people who we deal with all the time.

The inmates who participate are carefully screened by officials to be those with exceptional behavior, Perry said. The prison also does “pretty intense intel” by listening to phone calls and reading letters between inmates and their families to “make sure they have established a positive and healthy relationship with their families,” Perry said.

They also are inmates who regularly go out into the community as work crews, pulling weeds, mowing lawns and helping set up for local rodeos.

“We, the city, we utilize TRCI for work crews fairly regularly,” said Mark Morgan, Hermiston’s assistant city manager. “We feel pretty confident and comfortable having used them in those capacities in the past, knowing the level of security detail that comes along with that, and with

the professionalism that they run those things, that’s why we felt comfortable with” the splash park event.

For those work crews, one officer tags along, TRCI officials say. But for the upcoming programs, groups will be joined by a bigger group of counselors and law enforcement officers.

“This event is so everyone feels comfortable,” Perry said. “But what they don’t realize is that this event is also therapeutic and rehabilitative.”

Last month, inmates went fishing with their families at ponds near McNary Wildlife Nature Area. A group of local dentists donated the fishing poles, which children got to bring home with them. The Oregon State Police also attended the event and handed out free bracelets to kids.

“The positive interaction with police at that fishing event, the children, the care providers and the AICs, was phenomenal,” said Kaycie Thompson, a spokesperson for TRCI.

“And if we keep doing that kind of thing, we’re going to help break the cycle of incarceration for these families.”

The event at the Hermiston Splash Park takes place 8:30-10:30 a.m., when the facility is not open to the public. The Hermiston Police Department is attending to handing out gift certificates for free Slurpees at 7-11.

Perry said it’s meant to be a therapeutic event for inmates and their families.

Thompson said this is an important opportunity to “get beyond the razor wire.”

“We’ve had AICs come up to us while we’re watching our grandchildren in our community and say, ‘Hey, I’m out and I’m staying out and I’m down here with my child,’” said Kaycie Thompson, a spokesperson for TRCI. “This is a transition.”

Perry said the prison has yet to plan any more events in the future because of the status of COVID-19 cases in the county, but said she hopes more will come.

Supplies:

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fees while federal relief money, known as Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) funds, will cover school supplies.

This round of ESSER funds, the third installment of Education Stabilization Funds from the federal CARES act, became available for K-12 after the Department of Education approved their release on July 15.

Oregon, which has been granted about \$1.1 billion in education funding to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic, can spend the ESSER funds to address a long list of issues.

According to the press release, “The approval of these plans enables states to receive vital, additional American Rescue Plan funds to quickly and safely reopen schools for full-time, in-person learning; meet students’ academic, social, emotional, and mental health needs; and address disparities in access to educational opportunity that were exacerbated by the coronavirus pandemic,” said U.S. Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona.

Mooney said they calculated how much each district would receive by looking at the average number of students enrolled and placed restrictions on how they could spend the money. Hermiston School District has received a total of \$16.75 million in ESSER grants according to data compiled from the Oregon Department of Education.

“Because of how those funds are targeted and being able to provide opportunities for students, because of COVID, we were able to utilize those funds to provide the school supplies,” Mooney said.

In prior years the school district would release a supply list and have parents purchase all necessary supplies. If they couldn’t afford sup-

plies, community groups and organizations would often donate supplies to those who didn’t have access to them.

“I think it’s fantastic that the school district is providing supplies,” said Reagan Bass, an employee of Umatilla-Morrow County Head Start, an agency that provides services to families in the Hermiston School District and neighboring areas. “When you have six kids it adds up,” she added.

The idea to provide school supplies started last year when COVID-19 hit, said Briana Cortaberria, Hermiston School District’s communication officer and executive assistant.

Cortaberria said each class began to have its own supplies in response to safety measures and to maintain the health and safety of students.

“It kind of came out of a progression of what we learned last year,” Mooney said.

While the total cost of school supplies that Hermiston School District requested in 2019 ranges between \$25-\$50 if buying the cheapest items at Walmart, this number can quickly add up as the number of children in a family increases. This number also increases as school supplies, such as pencils and

paper, run out throughout the school year, forcing parents to buy replacements.

This number does not include other common back-to-school shopping supplies, such as clothing and electronics, which Hermiston School District will not be providing.

This move to provide basic school supplies comes as spending for back-to-school shopping continues to hit record highs, according to the National Retail Federation. A survey published by the NRF that involved 7,704 participants found that families with children grades K-12 plan to spend an average of nearly \$850 per family in 2021, up from an average of almost \$700 in 2019 — an increase of more than 21%.

“Coming off what’s been a difficult year for all of our families, and I think we have a lot of families that have some financial uncertainty, we just felt like this was a good use of those funds to be able to provide that opportunity for all of our kids to have access to the same equity in their school supplies,” Mooney said.

She said the district plans to reassess whether school supplies are a priority going forward.



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Boxes of school supplies line a meeting room Thursday, Aug. 5, 2021, at Armand Larive Middle School in Hermiston. The Hermiston School District purchased the supplies with emergency relief funds from the CARES Act and will provide the items at not cost to all students in the district to alleviate the financial burden on families of purchasing school supplies.

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Thursday, August 12—3:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.

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2. Event Location
 - Key Technology, Northwest Parking Lot 150 Avery Street, Walla Walla, WA
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