



Kathy Aney/Hermiston Herald

Ben Armstrong signs a copy of an anthology that contains his story "Sleigh 54" on Wednesday, Oct. 20, 2021, in the Hermiston High School commons.

SCARYSTORY by Hermiston student hits the shelves in time for Halloween

Ben Armstrong has first major publication, "Sleigh 54"

By ERICK PETERSON
Hermiston Herald

Ben Armstrong, a junior at Hermiston High School, may have just taken his biggest step yet as a published author.

The 17-year-old celebrated Wednesday, Oct. 20 for his birthday and the release of *What Remains: An Inked in Gray Anthology*, edited by Dakota Rayne and San G. Crow. Armstrong wrote a short story, "Sleigh 54," which was published in the book.

Hermiston High School staged a signing party for Armstrong, who said he was enjoying the attention his first major published story has brought. He had been published on a few websites previously, but those sites are small, Armstrong said.

Family members were in attendance — his mother, his father, his stepfather, his stepmother and his sister. Friends, his girlfriend, teachers and other well-wishers also showed up to the gathering. Everyone took their turn swarming around the young author in his moment of triumph.

Armstrong's story earned its place among 16 tales in the book. Three hundred short stories had been considered for publication; all but the 16 were rejected, Armstrong said.

Delia Fields, Hermiston School District librarian, organized the signing for Armstrong. She said he is one of those students she often sees in the library, and she likes his story.

"It's very clever and very creative," she said. "For me, it's a fun kind of scary story, because I'm not into some of the super creepy dark ones. It's just enough twisted."

She said she thinks Armstrong is "on his way" to an impressive literary career. She said she likes his drive and skill. As he gains confidence, he will continue charting a path as an author, she said.

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County commission candidates get early start on campaigns

By ANTONIO SIERRA
EO Media Group

It's more than four months until the candidate filing deadline, seven months until the primary and more than a year until the general election, but the race for a seat on the Umatilla County Board of Commissioners is well underway.

Susan Bower of Pendleton submitted her filing forms for Position 1 on the first day of the filing period and one of her opponents, Cindy Timmons of Milton-Freewater, entered her name a month later. Despite the long runway until Election Day, both candidates already have spent thousands of dollars in their effort to succeed George Murdock on the board.

Bower, the owner of the Pendleton-based Eastern Oregon Business Source, a consulting business, announced her candidacy in June and formed a political action committee to begin fundraising in August. In an interview, Bower said getting her campaign running early was a part of her strategy.

"In order to (campaign) what I consider strategically and properly, it would take not only time, but it would take a variety of methods to get out to people and to get in front of people," she said. "Two major resources: time, lots and lots of it, and money. With that plan in mind, I knew that I better get on it, because both of those resources are limited resources for all of us."

Since opening her campaign account, Bower has raised nearly \$2,900 and spent more than \$10,900. Bower said she doesn't have a definitive spending goal for the campaign, but she and her family committed to covering 50% of the campaign costs, the rest covered by fundraising. Early donors include Jill and Mike Thorne of Pendleton and Tom Winn of Helix.

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Local libraries try to bounce back with regular schedules of events

By ERICK PETERSON
Hermiston Herald

As COVID-19 restrictions lessen, local libraries have been steadily resuming a regular schedule of events. Library patrons, too, have been returning, slowly but surely, according to library representatives.

Friday morning, Oct. 23, offered a test of local's willingness to visit library events, with the Traveling Lantern Theatre Company performing "The Merry Tales of Robin Hood" at the Hermiston Public Library. Twenty-three people attended the performance, which was a good turnout, according to librarians.

Hermiston

Mary Dowdy, Hermiston library assistant and children's programmer, said she has seen a steady increase in

event attendance. For some time, she has read to children at the library. Her readings are on Tuesday morning. She is doing these now, but they were canceled for much of the past couple of years.

Starting the second week of September, she resumed her public reading schedule. During the first week, however, no one showed up. This was not a big surprise for her, as she knew it would take a while for families to know she was reading for children again. Her worries began, however, the following weeks.

For the second and third weeks, only five children showed up to the story time, she said.

As she likes reading to children, the small number of attendees troubled her. She wondered if, perhaps, the weekly event should be

stopped, at least for the time being.

Then, at week three, her fortunes reversed course. More than 20 children came, and the numbers have improved slightly since.

"It's picking up, so I'm happy," Dowdy said.

Still, the library has remained cautious about events. The upcoming pumpkin-decorating activity is an example of this. In previous years, the library hosted decorating classes, with a guest showing children how to decorate, Dowdy said. This year, the library intends to set out decorating kits starting Oct. 26, but it has not planned any class or public activity.

Mark Rose, library director, said the road back from COVID-19 has been difficult. For much of 2019, the library was closed. The doors were locked starting

in March 2019, then opened in the summer, closed again and reopened.

For a time, everything except the checkout of books, was ceased. This included regular events. At least one item on the schedule, Adult Storytime for people with learning disabilities, was ended at the library but resumed elsewhere. That activity will remain at The Arc of Umatilla County in Hermiston, even though the Hermiston library is restarting its schedule for other activities.

"We're always pleased to have customers come in," Rose said. He reported having "good numbers" of people coming in the door. More and more people are using the library, he added. He said he believes there will be even more library users

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Erick Peterson/Hermiston Herald

Mary Dowdy, Hermiston library assistant and children's programmer, poses Monday, Oct. 25, 2021, with a couple of books she plans on reading for children's story time. Local libraries are working to bring back more of their programs as the pandemic ebbs.