

Ring in 2022 with fireworks and family fun

EOTEC hosts New Year's Eve Bash

By **TAMMY MALGESINI**
Hermiston Herald

HERMISTON — A New Year's Eve Bash for the whole family is planned at Eastern Oregon Trade and Event Center, 1705 E. Airport Road, Hermiston.

If ringing in 2021 seemed a bit subdued because of on-going COVID-19 restrictions, people are invited to put on their party hats and make up for lost time. The event kicks off with a parking lot tailgate party Friday, Dec. 31. EOTEC General Manager Al Davis said the gates will open at 3 p.m. for people to begin staking out spots and setting up their party zones.

Revelers can bring barbecue grills, fire pits, patio heaters, drink coolers and more. Participants who will be drinking alcoholic beverages are reminded to appoint a designated driver or make arrangements in advance to ensure a safe ride home afterwards. Davis encourages people to use common sense.

"We're not going to supply alcohol but people are welcome to bring their own. Also, don't start a fire on my asphalt, bring a fire pit," he said. "We will monitor the event."

Family fun will be offered indoors at EOTEC beginning at 6 p.m. The cost for



Ben Lonergan/Hermiston Herald, File

Fireworks explode at the conclusion of a socially distanced tailgate party Jan. 1, 2021, over the Eastern Oregon Trade and Event Center in Hermiston. This year's New Year's Eve Bash will feature fireworks and more Friday, Dec. 31, at EOTEC.

entry into the building is \$5 per person and it includes movies, snacks and games, including laser tag. Davis also suggests people bring their favorite board games.

"We're entering a new era and trying to figure out a new normal," Davis said. "We just want to try and get people out and give them a place to go ... to enjoy some activities with their kids. If some-

one wants to bring something, they are more than welcome to do that."

And there's more — the Festival of Lights will be illuminated throughout the night beginning at 5 p.m. With bone-chilling cold predicted in the weather forecast, Davis suggests that people drive-thru the lights. However, if people want to view the lighted displays on

foot, he encourages them to bundle up. The event will crescendo with a fireworks display at midnight to help ring in 2022.

For more information, call 541-289-9800 or search www.facebook.com/eotechermonstonor.

Other New Year's Eve activities

Cosmic Family New Year Celebration

- Desert Lanes Family Fun Center
- 1545 N. First St., Hermiston

\$125/up to six people. Head to Desert Lanes for a cosmically fun celebration. Two sessions are available — 1-2:30 p.m. or 3-4:30 p.m. — featuring 90 minutes of glow bowling, shoe rental, a large pizza, a pitcher of soda, six \$5 arcade

cards and party favors. Call or stop by to reserve a package. (541-567-6364, www.bowldesertlanes.com)

Sliding into the New Year

- Midway Bar & Grill
- 1750 N. First St., Hermiston

No cover. A casual night of celebrating the coming year will get underway around 9 p.m. The event includes drink specials and low-key fun with friends. (541-567-5180, www.midwaybargrill.com).

New Year's Eve with Matt Borden

- The Pheasant Blue Collar Bar & Grill
- 149 E. Main St., Hermiston

\$15. Prepare for a honky tonk, country & western, get down, good time with Matt Borden to help ring in the New Year at The Pheasant. Get ready to kick up your heels starting at 9 p.m. Tickets are available for presale at the bar. (541-567-3022, www.thepheasantbarandgrill.com).

New Year's Eve Laughter

- The Rustic Truck Bar & Grill
- 8 p.m., 100 W. Highway 730, Irrigon

\$20 via www.brownpapperickets.com. For a night of food, drinks and laughs, head to The Rustic Truck. Headliner B.J. Johnson has been seen on LMAO TV and is TikTok famous with more than 10 million views. (541-922-4374, www.facebook.com/TheRusticTruck).

County officials say revised stats will show much higher vaccination rate

By **ANTONIO SIERRA**
Hermiston Herald

Umatilla County could see its vaccination rate jump without administering another dose of the COVID-19 vaccine.

Alisha Lundgren, the assistant director of Umatilla County Public Health, said the Oregon Health Authority recently contacted the county with new data that factored in residents who received their COVID-19 vaccines out-of-state. The new additions meant the state's data, which shows only 56.8% of county residents 18 and over have received at least one dose of the vaccine, would jump to 70.9%.

As of 4 p.m. Wednesday, Dec. 22, the OHA website still showed the 56.8% rate while the U.S. Centers for Disease Control shows a similar 58.9% vaccination rate. Lundgren said she expects OHA to update its statistics soon, but she couldn't share the official data because it belonged to the state.

While vaccinations administered on the Umatilla Indian Reservation haven't always been factored toward the county rate, Lundgren said the state already has made efforts to start including

them in before the latest update.

"Our OHA data team who manage our data are working on implementing what we would describe as a 'bi-directional data exchange through federal systems,'" according to Rudy Owens, public affairs specialist with the Oregon Health Authority. "This will allow us to incorporate data that captures the COVID-19 vaccine doses administered in other states into our data."

Owens also said this is not happening soon.

"We are still working with the vendor for our vaccine registry, known as ALERT IIS, to move this forward and implement it," he explained. "We expect this would happen sometime during in the first quarter of 2022."

For county officials, the public release of the updated vaccination rates will be a vindicating moment.

"We've been beating this drum since Day 1," county Commissioner John Shafer said.

Given Umatilla County's shared border with Washington, Shafer said it was logical that many county residents would seek vaccinations north of the state border. Mil-



Ben Lonergan/Hermiston Herald, File

Umatilla County Commissioner John Shafer receives his second dose of the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine from registered nurse Kelsi Reyes during a vaccination event April 30, 2021, in Pendleton. New data in late December could jump the county's vaccination rate from almost 59% to just shy of 71%.

ton-Freewater residents or veterans who get their medical care through the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs could go to Walla Walla to get the shot. Hermiston and Umatilla residents could get the shot in Tri-Cities by traveling 40 minutes or less.

Shafer said the county grew especially frustrated when state officials would use Umatilla County as an example of a county that needed to do better in vac-

inating its population during press conferences. Shafer said the state was

aware the county was missing out-of-state data from its count.

Lundgren said the potential statistical boost from out-of-state vaccinations should give residents more confidence that their neighbors are vaccinated. She added the updated number will not include minors. Children as young as 5 years old are eligible for the vaccine.

Despite the anticipated update to Umatilla County's COVID-19 statistics than previously understood, the county is not out of the woods quite yet. The county still is short of OHA's 80% goal and the omicron variant is starting to sweep the country. Although Umatilla County's daily case count remains low compared to the delta variant wave over the summer, Shafer said the public health department is working hard to encourage residents to get the booster shot to further protect themselves from the latest variant.

PET OF THE WEEK

MEET PONGO!

He is a very high energy puppy who needs training. He needs another dog to play with. Prefer someone who is home to help be more socialized.

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If interested please go to fuzzballrescue.com and fill out an application. If you are not able to adopt, but would like to foster or donate, visit fuzzballrescue.com or you can mail in donations to Fuzz Ball Animal Rescue, PO Box 580, Hermiston, OR 97838

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