

Echo: A small town big on community

BY MCKENZIE ROSE
Hermiston Herald

With a population well under 1,000, there is something special about the tiny city of Echo.

There are multiple factors to consider about the best aspects of an area, the landscape, businesses, general community and more. For now, let's start with Echo's primary natural feature — the Umatilla River.

This waterway provides a wonderful opportunity to cool off and swim, with a great stretch of rocks for peaceful riverside strolls. In addition to the river, there are some tranquil and beautiful walking paths around the town. You even can see wagon ruts from the Oregon Trail in certain areas, monumental history petrified in the ground, which is truly amazing to observe.



Rose

As you can imagine, a smaller town is much less noisy and busy than bigger ones. The train comes through every now and then, but that's really the main source of noise. For families with younger ones, or just people who enjoy biking or walking around, you don't have to worry about traffic in Echo.

That being said, Echo is not without character and flare. Have you ever seen turkeys wandering down Main Street in Hermiston? How about pigs, or my favorite, cows? I'll admit, I was very shocked to see all these animals just sauntering down the Echo streets. There's also a historic and old-town aura the city possesses, with its antique gas station and Western-style buildings. Such features have rendered Echo a prime spot for high school senior and prom photo shoots.

While small, Echo still has a couple of neat downtown shops, a cafe, two wineries, a museum and a corn maze. Numerous events throughout the year attract many people to town, including the Red to Red Bike Race, Ace Car Show and Oktoberfest, and on Saturday's the

Echo Farmers Market starts in the spring and wraps up in the fall.

Just like Echo's physical features, our school is special in many ways. Being K-12, there's a strong sense of unity as students move up through the grades. Whereas most towns have separate elementary, middle and high schools, Echo has it all in one. Soon enough, you get to know people pretty well — and not just their name or face, but who they really are.

Our smaller size also enables us to do many things that just aren't possible for larger schools. For instance, during graduation, the senior class compiles photos of themselves throughout the years into a slideshow. Graduating an average of 15 students a year, each senior gets a good three minutes to share a part of their life with the audience. With the hundreds of seniors other schools graduate, such a project would not be feasible.

One of my favorite parts about Echo, though, is how the community comes together. Whether it's Friday Night Lights Football games, FFA events or anything in between, the community is highly involved. Particularly, the state send-offs are quite stunning. We have had a few sports teams qualify for state tournaments recently in volleyball, soccer, basketball and track and field, and they all received a warm parting from their proud community. On the day the athletes are to depart, their bus is escorted to the freeway by firetrucks and police cars with wailing sirens. Up and down the streets, residents wave and cheer them on.

Having been on the inside of such buses, it is very humbling to see how much your community supports you. That is something I hope Echo never loses.

Having said all this, it is important to note that expansions are being made. Grow though it may, we can only hope that Echo will retain its pleasant small town feel that has attracted people from all over.

■ McKenzie Rose, a junior at Echo High School, writes the Hermiston History section for the Hermiston Herald.



Hermiston Herald, File

A 1933 Ford Coupe owned by Todd and Mary Dimbat was on display May 28, 2016, during the Echo Car Show.



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Pastor John Marcum, right, of the Echo Community Church, passes through the buffet line Nov. 20, 2021, during a Thanksgiving meal the church in Echo hosted.

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