



Cherise Kaechele /The Observer

The La Grande Farmers Market operates twice a week through October. For those on SNAP, a program offered by the Farmers Market will double the amount of money used from EBT cards.

MARKET

Continued from Page 1A farmers markets for food purchases. The Double Up Food Bucks program doubles the value of SNAP benefits at participating farmers markets.

“So when you take \$10 off your EBT card, we give \$10 free to spend at the farmers market,” said Jessica Bogard, vice president of the La Grande Farmers Market Board.

The support has been so robust from local sponsorships this month that the La Grande Farmers Market is boosting the amount of money available to SNAP recipients.

The Double Up Bucks limit has been \$10 at the La Grande Farmers Market the past 2-1/2 years, but starting Saturday it will be increased to \$20 and remain at this limit until September. This means those with an EBT card will be able to get \$40 worth of produce for only \$20 in August.

“We are so excited to be able to do this,” Merrill said. “We want to make dollars go further.”

Those who the Double Up Bucks program are helping include Tara Beckham of La Grande, a single mother of three. Beckham said

she never misses a Farmers Market because of the program. The Double Up program allows her to buy enough fruit and vegetables to last the three or four days between markets, which are held each Tuesday and Saturday in La Grande.

Beckham felt so strongly about the Double Up program that she worked to get local sponsors to ensure its continuation.

“I wrote letters to Grande Ronde Hospital (asking it to help sponsor the program),” she said.

Beth Wasley, who helps operate the Farmers Market, said the Double Up program is drawing in new people and adding to the market’s vitality. Farmers Market statistics, she said, indicate in 2017 the local market had 739 SNAP transactions, almost all of which involved customers using the Double Up program.

Bogard is delighted with such statistics.

“We are thrilled to have so many people participating in the program,” she said.

Bogard believes participation in Double Up Food Bucks would be even higher if more people eligible to participate in it knew about it. She said it is hard to get the word out because of privacy laws that prevent Farmers

Market leaders from obtaining phone numbers and addresses of SNAP recipients.

“We cannot send out letters,” she said.

Farmers Market staff instead use social media as well as print media and other media outlets.

Bogard said one merit of the Double Up Bucks Food program is it encourages people to eat more fresh fruits and vegetables and less processed food, which often is higher in salt, sugar and fats.

“Processed food is cheaper, and healthy food is less accessible,” she noted.

She also hopes the Double Up Food Bucks program will help everyone feel welcome at the Farmers Market.

“We want to be all inclusive,” Bogard said. “This puts all our food in reach of families.”

The La Grande Farmers Market is now lining up sponsors for its 2019 Double Up Food Bucks program.

“We hope that we can sustain the program,” Bogard said. “We want to keep reaching out to the community.”

The La Grande Farmers Market is open from 9 a.m. to noon on Saturdays and from 3:30 p.m. to 6 p.m. on Tuesdays at Max Square. The 2018 season runs through Oct. 20.

BOOTHS

Continued from Page 1A Committee.

Edwards said Internal Revenue Service rules prohibit organizations registered as nonprofits from being involved in political activities in which support is shown for one cause or candidate.

Edwards cited an IRS code that states all section 501(c)(3) organizations “are absolutely prohibited from directly or indirectly participating in, or intervening in, any political campaign on behalf of (or in opposition to) any candidate for elective public office.”

The IRS code states violating this prohibition may result in denial or revocation of tax-exempt status and the imposition of certain excise taxes.

“We do not want to put our nonprofit 501(c)(3) status at risk,” Edwards said.

Knop said the voter registration booth would not have had the Union County Democrats’ name displayed anywhere and none of the volunteers would have spoken in favor or opposition to any political point of view. Any information on political parties provided at the booth would have been nonpartisan, identical to what the Oregon Secretary of State office provides voters. Knop said because the voter registration booth would have been nonpartisan, it would not have interfered with the Cove Community Association’s nonprofit status.

Indeed, the IRS 501(c)(3) code states that “activities intended to encourage people to participate in the electoral process, such as voter registration and get-out-the-vote drives, would not be prohibited political campaign activity if conducted in a non-partisan manner.”

The IRS code also warns:

“Voter education or registration activities with evidence of bias that (a) would favor one candidate over another; (b) oppose a candidate in some manner; or (c) have the effect of favoring a candidate or group of candidates, will constitute prohibited participation or intervention.”

This paragraph is what concerns Edwards. She explained that if the Cove Community Association allowed the Union County Democrats to have a booth, it would have to let other political organizations have booths. She said this would mean that any perceived slight could be interpreted as political favoritism under the IRS code.

“There is no way to show complete impartiality,” Edwards said.

She noted for example if one political booth were placed under a tree and another in the sun because no shady spots were still available, it could be interpreted as favoritism for one party.

She said this is why the Cherry Fair Committee “decided to deny all political vendors to avoid the perception of any partisanship or favoritism.”

Knop said he understands the Cove Cherry Fair’s decision.

“I believe its motivation is to try to be fair,” he said.

Still, he believes it would be wonderful to be able to have a voter registration booth at the Cherry Fair.

“We are simply trying to improve voter registration,” he said.

Knop said there is desperate need for this.

“Voter participation is dismal in this state,” Knop said. “We need to invest in voter outreach.”

Edwards noted the Union County Democrats will be welcome to set up a voter registration booth during the fair in Cove as long as it is off property where fair events are being conducted and landowner permission is received.

DEBATE

Continued from Page 1A Skinner said she would like to see them formatted as either a debate with a neutral moderator or a town hall-style debate where members of the audience can ask questions.

If the two parties can secure a debate in Eastern Oregon, McLeod-Skinner suggested Eastern Oregon University as an ideal sponsor.

McLeod-Skinner said she expects Walden to honor his word and schedule some debates, noting the U.S. House of Representatives was currently in recess and he was making time for a fundraiser in Wilsonville Monday night, which The Oregonian reported to include Speaker of the House Paul Ryan.

Neither Walden’s campaign or legislative office returned requests for comment.

Governor’s race

While Eastern Oregon could play a role in the District 2 debate schedule, it doesn’t appear a likely setting for the race between Gov. Kate Brown and her Republican challenger, state Rep. Knute Buehler of Bend.

Christian Gaston, Brown’s campaign spokesman, wrote in an email that the three hosts will be Children First, and television stations KOB and KGW.



WesCom News Service

Rep Greg Walden has been challenged to multiple debates by his opponent Jamie McLeod-Skinner. She suggested EOU as the site for at least one of the debates.

Although the final details are still being determined, KGW and Children First are in Portland while KOB is in Medford.

“I think it’s important to note that television debates are closed events and are not open to the public, so the physical location doesn’t matter as much as the statewide reach of the event online and on broadcast,” he wrote. “We will work with all three hosts to make sure they are open to rebroadcast with partners statewide and the event is available online for everyone in the state to watch.”

Monica Wroblewski, Buehler’s campaign communications director, said the campaign continues to request a 10-debate schedule, two debates for each congressional district.

If Brown were to agree to such a schedule, Wroblewski said a location in Eastern Oregon would be included.

Both Brown and Buehler’s campaigns have confirmed they’ll be making future appearances in Eastern Oregon as a part of the campaign trail, but it likely won’t be in a debate setting.

The Westward Ho! Parade during the Pendleton Round-Up is a standard stop for office holders and political challengers alike, and both gubernatorial candidates plan to participate.

McLeod-Skinner also plans to attend, and although Walden’s campaign didn’t return a request for comment, the congressman has been a regular presence at the non-motorized parade.

PARK

Continued from Page 1A ers subdivided the property into 12 potential parcels so interested businesses could get a better idea of how much they would be able to purchase. However, the lot lines can be moved to accommodate a business’ needs.

“(The commissioners) had our first approved offer (for the Baum Industrial Park) on Monday,” Beverage said. “And other people are looking to get approved soon too.”

Another incentive the county is offering to potential businesses — as well as to the businesses already there — is paved roads. Right now, Commerce Road and the park’s other road — to be named Anderson Road after the late Steve Anderson who worked to get the Baum Industrial Park, Beverage said — are both graveled. Through a grant from Oregon Department of Transportation, plus contributions from Business Oregon and the county, the roads will be paved to make it easier on the businesses who are already there.

“We want to support existing businesses,” Beverage said. “And we want to have an incentive for new businesses to come here.”

Expanding existing businesses in Union County was a main platform for Beverage when she campaigned for commissioner. She said working with the Union County businesses and helping them is very exciting.

“I love it,” she said of taking the lead on the Baum Industrial Park. “This is exactly what I wanted to do. I really wanted to help retain what we have.”

Beverage said the county decided not to hire a Realtor for the industrial park in order to save the business owners money.

Now, she’s able to work

directly with businesses to make it as easy as possible for them to locate to the park.


“We want to be known as a business-friendly county,” she said.

She said the pavement project, which should be approved Aug. 15 followed by a call for bids, was a priority for the commissioners.

“There’s a truck painting business on this road,” Beverage said of Commerce Road. “They would paint their equipment then immediately have to go onto a graveled road with a lot of dust.”

She said that didn’t help the business at all.

The added bonus is once the paving is done, Anderson Road will be an official county road and will be plowed and taken care of.



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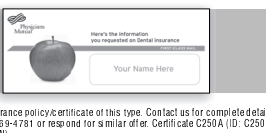
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