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MONDAY • August 6, 2018 • \$1

Good day to our valued subscriber Martha Lindley of Union

Taking it to the streets: Painted Piano Project brings gift of music

By Cherise Kaechele, The Observer

One woman's dream of giving music to everyone has become a reality on the streets of La Grande.

Jamie Jacobson has delivered four pianos to downtown for all to enjoy. And she hopes the community will rally behind her. "I noticed (pianos) in other towns," Jacobson recalled of where the original idea came from. "Tri-Cities has them. Then I went looking online and tons of places are doing this — pianos on sidewalks."

Jacobson, who is a voice teacher at Eastern Oregon University and who owns her own private studio, Studio Della Bella Voce (meaning studio of beautiful voice), said her philosophy is to make music accessible to everyone.

She has literally done just that. Four pianos — at U.S. Bank, Nature's Pantry, Direct Music Source and Community Bank — are now set up in La Grande, but Jacobson's dream won't be complete until they are fully painted by local artists. The aim of the project, which is officially called the Painted Piano Project, is to encourage any musically inclined

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Cherise Kaechele photos/The Observer

Above: Mary Kellogg, back, and Jamie Jacobson play the piano located inside Nature's Pantry on Friday afternoon. Jacobson has found locations for four pianos in downtown La Grande for people to play for free.

Below: The piano located in the alcove at U.S. Bank is an antique, Jamie Jacobson, who spearheaded this project, said. Her philosophy is to make music accessible to everyone. And she has done it.

"People from all different backgrounds, political organizations and religions can gather around a piano and enjoy it. They could be enemies, but for a period of time, they could love the same thing. Music is an equalizer. It doesn't know socioeconomic. It has no boundaries."

— Jamie Jacobson, organizer



Union County Fair continues growth after declines

By Max Denning
The Observer

After a dip in attendance — and presumably in enthusiasm — for the Union County Fair, the traditional annual event is showing signs of returning to its former glory.

Amy Horn, president of the Union County Fair Association and an advertising representative for The Observer, said attendance, which was down in 2014 through 2016, was up last year and the trend continued this year with 15,354 people through the gate, higher than last year's 14,947. Horn leads the fair board, which currently consists of four people. However, the board has three empty spots at the moment.

Margaret Spence, fair manager, said not having a full board hurts, but not as much as you might think.

"We would love to have a couple more board members, but sometimes you work best in a small group," Spence said. "It hasn't been bad, but we do need a full board eventually."

Spence and Horn agreed there was a lot to be excited about this year, including new food vendors, an exhibit by Cutco Knives and Cutlery and all-local musical acts. Another standout is the new policy that allows individuals to buy a beer in the beer garden and walk around with it outside the garden. Spence noted the fair association increased security this year

because of the new policy.

There are still places where the fair hopes to improve. Christine Courtright, a member of the fair's advisory board who has been involved in the Union County Fair for 48 years, said the number of entries for flowers, jams and jellies, and land products, such as fruits and vegetables, have decreased significantly.

Lori Ritter, fair association treasurer, said the lack of entries has been frustrating.

"If nobody enters, there's nothing to see," Ritter said. "People need to get more involved."

She said she believes people don't have the time they used to. Another way in which the fair hopes to improve is institutional

knowledge. Horn said in the past there was a lack of information being passed down from board to board. Horn was on the board last year as secretary.

"It's a challenge to get people involved and to stay involved," Horn said.

Courtright said this year a number of people resigned from the board near the time of the fair.

Despite that fact, the existing board and Spence agreed the fair is starting to come back together. One of the biggest challenges, Spence said, is demonstrating the fair has improved.

"It is changing people's perceptions of what the fair

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Rep. Walden declines to commit on debates

By Antonio Sierra
East Oregonian

Both candidates have taken different tacks since Democrat Jamie McLeod-Skinner challenged Republican Rep. Greg Walden to a series of debates at the Chief Joseph Days parade July 28.

McLeod-Skinner's campaign sent out a press release publicizing three scheduled debates between the candidates in Umatilla, Jackson, and Deschutes counties.

But despite Walden saying he would "look forward" to debating McLeod-Skinner, during the parade stop, Walden's office wouldn't directly comment on her proposal.

In an email, Walden spokesman Justin Discigil wrote that the 10-term congressman was focused on District 2 issues like wildfire's impact on air quality and local farms and ranches.

When pressed further, Discigil wrote "there will be a time for that discussion, and right now Greg is focused on other, more immediate matters."

For her part, McLeod-Skinner said in a previous interview that she believed Walden would honor his word, a sentiment that was further reflected in the invitation

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Pendleton man who harassed bison arrested at Glacier park

■ The man had caused multiple disturbances at other national parks

The Associated Press

MAMMOTH HOT SPRINGS, Wyoming — An Oregon man who was caught on video harassing a bison in Yellowstone National Park was arrested in Glacier National Park in the third disturbance in less than a week at a national park, officials said Friday.

Rangers looking for Raymond Reinke, of Pendleton, found him causing a disturbance Thursday evening at the historic Many Glacier Hotel in the popular Montana park, the National Park Service said. He remains jailed pending a hearing this week and has requested a court-appointed attorney. A message left at a phone listing for Reinke in Oregon was not immediately returned.

Reinke, 55, had been cited for drunken and disorderly conduct in a third national park, Grand Teton, more than a week ago and was released on \$500 bond that required him to follow the law and avoid alcohol.

Yellowstone rangers cited him three days later for not wearing a seat belt and noted that he appeared intoxicated, park officials said. They didn't know of Reinke's bond conditions at the time.

Reinke was later cited after another Yellowstone visitor took video of him walking up to a bison in a roadway congested with stopped cars and waving his arms. The animal charges him a couple of times, but Reinke doesn't appear to get hurt.

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WEATHER Full forecast on the back of B section

Tonight 53 Low
Mainly clear

HOT Tuesday 96/57
Sunny, very hot

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Issue 91
2 sections, 16 pages
La Grande, Oregon

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Call The Observer newsroom at 541-963-3161 or send an email to news@lagrandeobserver.com. More contact info on Page 4A.

