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Williams versus

Mona Williams and Wes Williams vie for judgeship

By Max Denning

When Circuit Judge of Oregon's 10th Judicial District Russell B. West retired in May, Gov. Kate Brown appointed Mona K. Williams, then Wallowa County District Attorney, as the first woman to serve as circuit judge in Union and Wallowa counties.

In November, Mona will run for reelection less than six months after being appointed, against Wes Williams, an attorney based in La Grande. The opponents are not related.

Mona is originally from Joseph, where she graduated from Joseph High School. She then went on to attend Eastern Oregon University, where she earned a bachelor of science degree in 1986. Three years later, she earned a juris doctor degree from the University of Idaho. In 2007, she was elected Wallowa County DA. Mona had previously considered becoming a judge, but it wasn't until West announced his retirement that the circumstances felt right.

"I've always thought being a judge is something I wanted to do," she said. "It's been a goal since I went back to school and

See Judges / Page 5A

Boise Cascade to sell La Grande, Island City facilities

By Cherise Kaechele

Boise Cascade entered into a purchase agreement Tuesday with Woodgrain Millwork to sell three of its facilities in Northeast Oregon.

According to a press release posted to the Nasdaq website, Woodgrain has agreed to take over the Boise Cascade lumber

mills in La Grande and Pilot Rock and the particleboard plant in Island City. This transaction does not include the plywood mill or the powerhouse and log utilization center in Elgin.

"The sale to Woodgrain allows us to further focus on our veneer-based engineered wood products and plywood businesses," said Mike Brown, senior vice

president of operations, Boise Cascade Wood Products division, in the release. "Woodgrain is a family-owned company with a solid reputation in the industry. The products manufactured at these Northeast Oregon facilities are a good fit with their business strategy."

Lisa Chapman, Boise Cascade media contact, told The Observer

on Tuesday the sale will impact 109 employees in Union County. A total of 256 employees, including those in management, work in the three facilities.

The due diligence process, which looks at Boise Cascade's assets and liabilities, will take approximately 50 to 60 days, Chapman said. After that, the

See Boise / Page 5A

UNION WELCOMES NEW CREDIT UNION

Old West Federal Credit Union restores local banking in Union, cuts down on citizen travel

By Dick Mason

A new financial institution is in Union's future.

Old West Federal Credit Union has purchased the former Community Bank branch building at 539 South Main Street and announced it will open a branch there. An opening date has not been set, but minor remodeling

work, site preparation and equipment installation will start in several weeks.

"We are very excited to be bringing banking services back to the folks of Union, and I want to thank the city leaders, past and present, local business owners and Bob Kavanaugh of the Union County Chamber for the role they all played in bringing Old

West to town," said Ken Olson, Old West's CEO and president.

Union has not had a bank in town since Umpqua Bank closed its branch in late June 2016.

Olson said there is a chance Old West could open its new branch in Union within the next 3-1/2 months.

"Ideally, we would like to be in before the first of the year," he said.

Olson said the actual schedule will be determined by how long it takes Old West to secure certain types of specialized items, including cash handling equipment and an automatic teller machine.

Old West is a community-chartered, federally insured credit union with more than \$170 million in assets and 12,000 members in and around Eastern Oregon. Credit unions are not-for-profit organizations

See Union / Page 5A



Cherise Kaechele/The Observer

Old West has announced it will be coming to the City of Union. The credit union, which has locations in La Grande, Baker City and John Day, hopes to be moved in by the first of the year.

Wallowa County Commissioner race attracts a pack

Four candidates file in less than two weeks

By Katy Nesbitt

A flurry of candidates filed to run for Wallowa County Commissioner over the last two weeks following the death of Commissioner-elect Bruce Dunn.

In order to fill the position for the November general election, the county was granted an expedited candidacy filing period by the Oregon Secretary of State just days after Dunn's death.

Dunn won the non-partisan race against Diane Daggett in May and was to be sworn in at the Wallowa County Commissioners' Jan. 7 meeting. He died of a heart attack Aug. 21 while

touring a timber harvest unit associated with the Lower Joseph Creek Restoration Project.

Diane Daggett

Dunn's former opponent is one of four candidates who filed to run before the Sept. 4 deadline.

The Joseph native said as commissioner she would focus on protecting the constitutional rights of Wallowa County residents.

"I would protect our right to free speech, and if there are initiatives that would

See Wallowa / Page 6A



Daggett

Community efforts bring internet safety program to Union County middle schoolers

By Audrey Love

Pause. Think. Learn. That's the challenge presenter Doug Crawford issued to an auditorium of almost 300 seventh-graders Tuesday morning on behalf of Protect Young Eyes, a program educating students on the risks associated with internet and social media use and how to use those platforms more responsibly.

Middle schoolers from across Union County gathered at EOU's Gilbert Center Sept. 11 for an afternoon of presentations and three different breakout sessions to discuss topics such as cyberbullying, respecting others online, identifying and cultivating healthy relationships and the risks and laws surrounding sexting.

The potential dangers inherent in social media are a reality for children and teens no matter



Cherise Kaechele/The Observer

Doug Crawford of Protect Young Eyes talked to Union County seventh graders Tuesday about the risks associated with internet and social media use.

where they live. Aware of the risks, the Union County District Attorney's office and other community partners decided to do something about it.

According to Union County DA Kelsie McDaniel, "I wanted to do something to address some of the problems we were seeing from

See Young / Page 6A

INDEX table with categories like Business, Classified, Comics, Crossword, Dear Abby, Horoscope, Letters, Opinion, Record, Sports, Sudoku.

WEATHER section with icons for clouds and sun, and text for 'Tonight' (41 Low, Mostly cloudy) and 'Thursday' (63/36, Party sunny).

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