



Observer file photo

ODOT will issue three permits for the I-84 Ladd Canyon area in Union County for those who want to earn money by helping chain up commercial vehicles during winter months.

ODOT

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the chain-up permits will be allowed to provide this service to truck drivers in designated chain-up areas. The permits will be valid between Nov. 1 and April 1, 2019, according to the release.

“This is a safety issue,” ODOT Permit Specialist Tom Lapp said. “Limiting permits for each district is necessary to help control the number of people working along state highways during winter weather conditions.”

The amount of crashes

that occur on the interstate during the winter time increases dramatically. The cold temperatures make for slick conditions, which is why a limited amount of people can be on the side of the road.

In the past, crashes have occurred because people are not driving for the road conditions. In 2015, a chain reaction of accidents occurred because one lane of the interstate was blocked by trucks chaining up. A two-mile stretch of accidents happened during that incident.

Just days before Christmas in 2015, a semi-truck

driver out of Nampa, Idaho, was driving a 2011 Kenworth truck in the left lane and was allegedly traveling too fast for the conditions. The driver had to brake suddenly when the vehicle in front of him had either slowed or stopped in the lane, OSP Sgt. Kyle Hove told The Observer.

The trailer jackknifed and plowed into the chain-up area. In total, the Nampa man’s trailer took out at least four semis before it finally stopped in the left lane, Hove said.

Drivers rarely change lanes to give room to truck-

ers chaining up, Hove previously told The Observer.

The state has built in chain-up areas for semis, but sometimes they are overflowed, or truck drivers don’t know where they are and stop on the side of the road not designated for a chain-up area.

Permits are issued to give truck drivers some help and move them along quickly, but safety is an issue during these times as well.

For more information, or to apply for a permit, contact Lynn Elliott at the La Grande office at 541-963-8407.

EOU

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in 2012. At OSU, she earned a master’s degree in public health and a doctorate in kinesiology in 2016. Following her graduation from OSU, Hamm became an assistant professor at Georgia Gwinnett College in Lawrenceville, Georgia. She said she was drawn to EOU because of its location and the size of the university.

Hamm said she plans to be at EOU for the foreseeable future.

“I definitely like it here. It seems like a great fit for talking about health promotion and combining that with our focus on physical activity from the department,” she said. “I think there are a lot of opportunities to engage students with outdoor health opportunities.”

In addition to teaching, Hamm said she hopes to help students get involved in the La Grande community.

“I’m currently looking at trying to connect with community organizations and see what the need is in the community for health promotion,” Hamm said. “My passion is working with individuals with disabilities, so (I am) trying to work with a community organization to help them out and also provide an opportunity for students to get some experience.”

When she’s not working at EOU, Hamm likes to backcountry ski, hike and bike around town.

Tim Harrison

When Tim Harrison received a master’s degree in computer science in 1978, degrees in the field were not nearly as common as they are today.

“I taught as an adjunct professor at two different universities in (what was called) ‘graduate computer science,’ which today would be what a freshman took,” Harrison said, pointing out students coming into graduate programs in computer science often had an undergraduate degree in another field.

After teaching as an adjunct at North Texas and Texas Woman’s College in the early 1980s, Harrison spent almost 30 years working as a professional computer scientist. He called himself a “generalist” who didn’t specialize in any specific part of computer science. In his professional career, Harrison worked for a range of companies from large outfits such as Texas Instruments to much smaller ones such as Complete Data Solutions.

Harrison left the computer science field after the dot-com bubble burst in the early 2000s and then worked for a couple of years as a U.S. stock options trader, but stopped that endeavor after

the stock market crashed in 2008.

In 2009, he began teaching mathematics and computer science at high schools and middle schools in Southern California. Now, Harrison has his first full-time teaching job at a university.

“I was applying for anything that I was qualified for,” Harrison said.

Also in his first year at EOU, Harrison hopes to engage more with the campus. He had never visited La Grande before he came for an on-campus interview, and had only visited Portland once before.

“(I want to) become more comfortable with the way EOU operates and become a part of the community,” he said, adding another reason he and his wife decided to move to La Grande was that it was a good fit for their hobbies.

Harrison said in his first semester at EOU, he has a very heavy load. He’s teaching three classes, while also in the midst of designing the curriculum for two online classes he’ll be teaching in future semesters.

“Right now I’m trying to survive and stay above water,” Harrison said. “I’m hoping in a few years I will have mastered the courses I’m teaching and we will have continued developing the computer science program into something (that) gets recognition.”

PETSENSE

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surrendered by their owner(s).

Petsense’s partnership with the local shelter is the first of many outreach efforts the business hopes to make — another being with the city’s Parks and Recreation Department’s dog park at Riverside Park. Parker emphasized the store’s desire to be an asset to the community, whether through more partnerships or helping out in other ways, saying the company “really likes being involved (and) wants to be here for the community.”

The City of La Grande announced Petsense’s opening this summer. The city’s Economic Development office had been working with the company since spring 2017, when it was identified by the Buxton Company as a good fit for the area. Buxton, which has contracted with the city’s Urban Renewal Agency to provide viable economic development opportunities for the city to pursue, determined the pet chain could potentially thrive in La Grande.

“I wanted to be involved with a store I wasn’t wor-

ried about closing down,” Parker said. “We’ve had so many stores come into town (and later close) or the market is already oversaturated. This seemed like something that was different.”

The store encompasses pet care of all kinds — from cats and dogs to birds, reptiles and fish — and offers an array of pet supplies and services, including grooming. Though the store doesn’t sell cats or dogs, tinier creatures such as bearded dragons, leopard geckos and betta fish are available in-store.

“We don’t have anything else (in La Grande) that caters more to small-pet supplies,” Parker said. “We have a wide variety (at Petsense), where a lot of other stores are more limited on what they actually have to offer because they’re a bigger retail space, whereas we specialize in all that.”

“I project us staying around. I see us growing with the community and really being able to help out with the animal issues we have around here, especially with adoption,” Parker said of the store’s initial success. “We’ve had good sales so far. We’re really impressed.”

TREE

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and staff he alluded to in 1998, were among about 60 people who attended a ceremony saluting Wood. An oak tree recently planted in the front lawn of UHS was dedicated in honor of Wood, who served as an educator in the Union School District from 1984 until he retired in 2011.

“This oak tree is a good choice to symbolize Mike’s service,” said UHS English and writing teacher Vivian Matthews in opening remarks at the dedication. “The mighty oak is a symbol of strength, resistance and knowledge. Mike has been strong in his convictions, resisting opposition to build a place of knowledge.”

Matthews, who served as a student teacher under Wood in the spring of 1988, helped organize Saturday’s dedication.

“Mike, you have had far-reaching effects on many people,” she told him. “Your influence continues even in your retirement. This tree remains on campus to remind anyone who visits the Union School District of your influence.”

The tree is one of several that have been planted in honor of Union School District faculty and staff in recent years. Matthews said in the case of each of these employees the word “tree” serves as an acronym for “To Remember an Exemplary Employee.”

Union School District Superintendent Carter Wells said Wood’s leadership was instrumental in saving the school district during a time of financial difficulty.

“We might not be standing here today (as a school district)

if it were not for Mike,” said Wells.

Wells described Wood as the smartest and brightest person he’s worked with, one who has an intuitive understanding of “school culture (and) the nuances of a school district.”

Wood served as a mentor for Wells when Wells became superintendent.

“He’s probably the first person I’ll call (for advice),” Wells said.

Hayes credited Wood with creating a family-like atmosphere in the school district.

“Faculty and staff) were his friends, and he was our friend,” Hayes said. “He has always been a good guy.”

Jerry Mayes, who was a science teacher at Union High School when Wood taught English there and an assistant football coach for him while he was the UHS head football coach, echoed Hayes’ remark.

“It was just like we were a family,” said Mayes, who later joined the La Grande School District and is now retired.

Mayes also said he was impressed with how responsive Wood was to those on his staff when they presented ideas to him. He also was struck by his commitment to helping students succeed.

“He worked as hard as anyone, or harder,” Mayes said.

Former students of Wood’s who attended the dedication included Steve Sheehy, a student in a film class Wood taught.

“He opened up a world for us. He was always wise and thoughtful,” Sheehy said.

Mark Wing, a member of the Union School Board for more than 25 years, said Wood made the board’s job easier because he took care of problems



Dick Mason/The Observer

Union High School language arts teacher Vivian Matthews, left, reads introductory remarks at a tree dedication for retired educator Mike Wood, center, standing with his wife Roni.

early, before they were placed on the shoulders of the board.

“As a board member, I really appreciated Mike. He ran a great ship,” Wing said.

Wood began his education career at Redmond High School where he taught for one year. He next taught at Alsea High School for three years before coming to Union in 1984. He taught language arts at UHS for eight years before

becoming principal of Union Elementary School in 1992. He continued serving as the school’s principal after being named superintendent.

Wood was visibly moved by the outpouring of praise he received at Saturday’s dedication.

“It has been very emotional,” said Wood, who said working for the Union School District was a pleasure and an honor.

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