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THE OBSERVER

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Oregon Book Awards finalist visits EOU

By Audrey Love
The Observer

In the middle of a poetry reading, standing before a room full of Eastern Oregon University undergraduates and faculty, Ed Skoog slowly unbuttoned his shirt. The room looked on as Skoog's plaid button-down parted to reveal a "Potwin Panthers" T-shirt — a real-life relic from the poem he had just been reciting.

EOU played host to Skoog — one of the state's premier literary voices — at the Oct. 11 Oregon East Gala, a publication party for the campus literary magazine.

Skoog visited the university as part of the Oregon Book Awards Author Tour and concluded the gala with a short reading of three of his poems. His most recent collection, "Run the Red Lights," earned him a finalist's spot in the 2018 Oregon Book Awards.

The tour, sponsored by Portland-based nonprofit Literary Arts, shuttles Oregon Book Awards authors around the state every year for readings, writing workshops and school visits, often partnering with local groups and organizations in smaller, more rural communities to "reinforce con-
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Barreto hopes to help Oregon businesses if reelected

By Cherise Kaechele
The Observer

Oregon House Representative for District 58 incumbent Greg Barreto said he's learned a lot in his two terms and is looking to the future with determination. Every election year, candidates put a lot of their time and energy into campaigning, hoping to take over or keep their seat. Barreto said he hasn't done much campaigning for himself but has spent a lot of time recruiting candidates to strengthen the Republican presence in the state's House of Representatives.

"In Salem, most everyone is respectful and willing to listen to others. It's not a bad environment
See Barreto / Page 5A

Wallowa Mountain Loop Road construction set to improve fish and human passage

By Katy Nesbitt
For The Observer

Construction on a well-traveled stretch of the Wallowa Mountain Loop Road scheduled for 2019 will improve fish and human passage to federal lands.

Part of the \$8 million reconstruction project beginning at the

intersection of the Loop Road and Imnaha Highway includes replacing three culverts with an open bottom bridge, which will improve fish passage for threatened bull trout, chinook salmon and steelhead trout.

Wallowa County Commissioner Susan Roberts said the Oregon

Department of Transportation is providing the \$591,000 necessary for the new bridge and reconstruction of the Y-shaped intersection.

"The state is providing funding because the project improves safety off of their highway," Roberts said.

The bulk of the \$8 million came through the Federal Land

Access Program, a Federal Highway Administration grant, and will pay to reconstruct five miles of county road from the Imnaha Highway to the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest boundary.

Roberts said the road will be repaired and repaved and the

See Wallowa / Page 6A



By Max Denning
The Observer

Just two months ago, Cove resident Sam Delaney visited the Cove City Council to ask permission to host an official soap box derby rally. This past weekend it became a reality.

Nearly 20 riders participated in the first annual Blue Mountain Dash Soap Box Derby Rally Race, spending Saturday and Sunday racing

down Cove's Haefer Lane. Delaney estimated five racers were from out of town and about 13 racers were from the Cove and La Grande area.

The rally was coordinated through the Oregon Soap Box Derby Association and the All-American Soap Box Derby, a national organization. The races

were limited to official AASBD cars, which rally organizers loaned free of charge to those new to the sport.

For four years, Delaney has been taking his 11-year-old son, Reese, up and down the West Coast to soap box derby rallies. He thought it was time to host one locally.

"I thought Eastern Oregon would be very receptive to a soap box derby," Delaney said. "We have a lot of families in this area with kids, and I thought this was something they would like to participate in."

Delaney said approxi-

mately 10 to 12 of the kids were racing for the first time.

"It's one thing to explain how it works, but to actually see it firsthand was really valuable," Delaney said. "The feedback we got from people was that it was a really fun event."

David Siddle drove his 8-year-old daughter, Bella, nearly six hours from Camino Island, Washing-
See Derby / Page 5A

Cherise Kaechele / The Observer

Twenty children barreled down Haefer Lane in Cove as participants in the first Blue Mountain Dash Soap Box Derby Rally Race Oct. 14. Many of the racers were from Cove and nearly half of those who participated had never raced before.

Improved broadband speed crucial in rural areas

By Katy Nesbitt
For The Observer

As the global race to upgrade wireless networks to 5G heats up, rural Oregonians look to the advantages faster broadband would bring to their communities.

In July and September, Todd Nash, chairman of the Wallowa County Board of Commissioners, was invited to Washington, D.C., along with other representatives from rural America, to learn about improvements being made to wireless

connectivity Nash said improved broadband speed in remote areas is crucial where traveling for business is a big investment in time and money.

"Interfacing with other business from rural America is a huge concern here," Nash said.

Beyond business-to-business applications such as video conferencing and live-stream cattle auctions, Nash noted many Wallowa County farmers use precision agriculture equipment

outfitted with GPS systems.

"Here in Wallowa County we have a number of progressive farmers using auto steer on swathers and tractors to maximize every inch of pasture, instead of making multiple passes," he said.

When local service is slowed due to the influx of tourists in July, the peak of Wallowa County's tourist season, the draw down of broadband speed affects farmers as well as those in an office or at home trying to use the

internet.

Broadband service in the northeastern-most corner of Oregon is already woefully slow. Dennis Sands, mayor of Joseph and adviser at the county's Small Business Development Center, said while metro broadband users get speeds of around 100 megabytes, the fastest available in Wallowa County is 24 megabytes.

"5G opens up so many more possibilities for applications and capabilities. It's a quantum leap

over the present service," Sands said.

According to Rep. Greg Walden, R-Hood River, when 5G is rolled out, it will move data 10 to 100 times faster than 4G LTE, the fastest wireless service now available. Right now the U.S., China, Japan and South Korea are in a dead heat to get the service online.

As chair of the House of Representatives Energy and Commerce Committee, Walden said it's a race the U.S. can't lose.
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WEATHER Full forecast on the back of B section

Tonight 29 Low
Clear and cold

Tuesday 64/33
Plenty of sun

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WEDNESDAY

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