

Small-business & Ag HAPPENINGS

Ribbon cutting planned at Goss Family Jewelers

LA GRANDE — The Union County Chamber of Commerce invites the community to a ribbon cutting at Goss Family Jewelers, 116 Depot St., La Grande, at noon Oct. 19.

Le Bebe Cakes celebrates second anniversary

LA GRANDE — Le Bebe Cakes Bakery Coffee House is having a “Two Sweet” celebration from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. Oct. 20 at 1101 Washington Ave., La Grande. The Market Place business is turning two and everyone is invited to a family-friendly event with free treats, face painting, balloons, pinata, games and prizes.

Copper Belt Winery hosts annual fall harvest party

KEATING — Copper Belt Winery in Keating, about 15 miles northeast of Baker City, will have its annual Fall Harvest Party and Barrel Tasting Oct. 20 and 21. Events begin at noon both days. There will be wine tastings, food, drinks and music. For more information, visit the Copper Belt Winery page on Facebook or go www.copperbeltwinery.com.

AmeriGas program supports local schools

KEATING — AmeriGas, which provides propane in Baker, Union and Wallowa counties, awarded a check of \$501.81 to Keating Elementary School northeast of Baker City on Oct. 9 as part of the company’s School Days program.

The School Days program works like this: AmeriGas customers give their receipts to a school that is signed up for the program, and AmeriGas awards 2 percent of the total (with a cap of \$2,000) to the school. This is the first check AmeriGas has presented to a school in Baker County. Once a school is registered for the program, receipts can be accepted for both businesses and individuals. For information about the program, call 541-963-2811

Phoebe Charbonneau promoted to Baker Food Co-Op manger

BAKER CITY — Phoebe Charbonneau has been promoted to manager of the Baker Food Co-Op, 2008 Broadway St., Baker City. She replaces Carol Morrison, who retired Oct. 11. Charbonneau moved to Baker City a little more than 20 years ago with her three children. She worked in a seasonal position at the Oregon Trail Interpretive Center for 18 years and has worked at the Baker Food Co-Op for almost 2-1/2 years.

“Living in a rural community like Baker City has been a great place to raise a family and offers so many great outdoor opportunities,” Charbonneau said in a press release. “I especially enjoy gardening and learning about native plants. I look forward to serving the needs of our members and the community in my new role at the Co-Op.”

Wallowa County Chamber seeks table sponsors

ENTERPRISE — Nominations are now being accepted for the 2018 Wallowa County Chamber Citizen Awards, with the banquet planned for Jan. 27, 2019. The purpose of the awards is to recognize extraordinary individuals in the county. The theme of this year’s banquet is “Once Upon a Time.”

The Chamber is seeking businesses and organizations to sponsor a dinner table or a trade-show table. The sponsorship supports the awards program and provides an opportunity to showcase your business or organization or just do some networking within the community.

Sponsors of dinner tables provide decorations; beyond that there is no fee. To become a table sponsor, contact Cammie Hale 541-263-1087. The cost of a tradeshow table is \$10 and the Chamber provides a table and tablecloth. If you are interested in a tradeshow table, contact Darlene Johnson at 541-426-3025.

BBB employment scams increase in 2018

PORTLAND — According to an Oct. 15 press release, Better Business Bureau’s Scam Tracker reveals employment scams are on the rise.

With the busy holiday hiring season under way, job seekers should be aware

See **Briefly** / Page 2B

From Ballet to Hip Hop and Jazz: Altitudes Dance Academy in action

By **Trish Yerges**
For WesCom News Service

During the past five years, Katelyn Huelter, owner of Altitudes Dance Academy in La Grande, has seen student enrollment increase by leaps and bounds as children enjoy a wide variety of dance styles.

Huelter started her business in 2013, and instructs dance classes on the second floor of the old Zimmerman Building, 1315 Adams Avenue, owned by her parents, Brad and Jeanne Trisler.

At around 3:45 p.m. on Tuesdays and Thursdays, a score of dance students unload in front of the building and leap up the staircase to the dance studio where “Miss Kate” is waiting. With them come an entourage of parents and grandparents, a ready-made audience for the energized class.

Jillian Pye brings her 9-year-old daughter Amiah, who completed a three-day dance class in August and performed at the La Grande fairgrounds. She loved it so much, she enrolled at the beginning of September for the 2018-19 dance season.

“Miss Kate is very good with the kids,” said Pye. “Amiah catches on fast and is excited to attend dance class. Miss Kate is very patient with all the girls.”

Pye is excited about the dance classes because when she was younger, ballet was about the only dance style taught. “Here they get taught a variety of dances styles, including hip hop, jazz, and whatever else Miss Kate decides to come up with.”

Of course, basic dance steps are taught such



Trish Yerges / For WesCom News Service

Twenty-two dance students take lessons twice a week from instructor Katelyn Huelter (left) of Altitudes Dance Academy in La Grande. She has been teaching dance since 2013, and class enrollment has been growing in leaps and bounds with each passing year. Huelter teaches a variety of dance styles, including some ballet, hip hop, jazz and others. Advanced classes participate in competitions and this class is preparing for a performance.

as pirouettes, shuffling, arabesque, the pony, plie, grande jetes, cart wheels and lifts. Every step they learn in class is used in

their future dance recitals or competitions. Huelter, who worked as a paraprofessional educator, uses some very clever and fun

methods to teach dance steps to a class of 22 exuberant, dancing children. She teaches four

See **Dance** / Page 2B

Women in Agriculture Conference focuses on strengthening cash flow

Observer staff

ISLAND CITY — On Oct. 27, the 2018 Women in Agriculture Conference will offer women in Washington, Idaho, Oregon, Montana and Alaska a unique opportunity to gather in 34 different locations for a one-day event featuring knowledgeable speakers, inspiring stories, networking with other producers and practical advice for learning new skills.

This year’s event, “Pump Up Your Financial Fitness,” covers the topic of strengthening your farm operation with a healthy cash flow. Locally, the conference will be held at the OSU 4H and Extension Education Center Conference Room, 10507 N. McAlister Rd., Island City. Go to www.womeninag.wsu.edu for details about the conference and registration.

The financial management of an agricultural business often takes a back seat to the produc-

tion aspects of the operation, but it matters how you manage your cash flow to be successful as a farmer, according to WSU Douglas and Chelan County Extension Director and chair of the conference, Margaret Viebrock. Learning and using strategies to project and manage cash flow will make a difference in farm sustainability.

This interactive and engaging conference will motivate women in agriculture to become better financial managers. The format of this conference enables headline speakers at all locations, while still tailoring the conference content for each region, Viebrock added.

“Last year, nearly 600 women attended,” Viebrock said. “Many attendees reported it is the best conference for women producers because it presents practical information they can use right away.”

The lineup for the day includes

Robin Reid, farm economist, and LaVell Taylor, farm analyst, both with Kansas State University. Both speakers are also farmers and understand the importance of sound record keeping. Conference participants will leave with the best strategies to start projections for next year, know how to monitor cash flow against actual income, manage family living expenses and use record keeping tools.

Sarah Beth Aubrey, author, farmer and owner of Aubrey Coaching and Training, will provide the tools to help women be successful and profitable doing “what they love most.” Her message is about new ways to prioritize and balance the work between, farming, family and personal time. Her ideas for encouraging young women to farm and how to develop the management skills with women you employ are most valuable for continued farming success.

Each location will have a local panel of women farmers who have been successful in their financial management methods. They will explain their best financial strategies and how they bring balance to their daily jobs and responsibilities.

This conference is designed for women who are farming, as well as new and aspiring farmers. Supporting spouses, students, interns or people who own an agriculture-related business are also welcome. Financial lenders can learn the best practices for financial management.

The conference registration fee is \$35, and includes the workshop, light breakfast, lunch and conference materials. Persons with a disability requiring special accommodations while participating in this program may contact Margaret Viebrock at 509-745-8531 or viebrock@wsu.edu.

Sears files for Chapter 11 amid plunging sales, massive debt

By **Anne D’Innocenzio**
AP Retail Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Sears filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection Monday, with plans to shutter 142 unprofitable stores in the hopes it can stay in business.

The question now is whether a smaller version of the company that once towered over the American retail landscape can be viable. Sears, which started as a mail order catalog in the 1880s, has been on a slow march toward extinction as it lagged far behind its peers and incurred huge losses over the years.

At its peak, the operator of Sears and Kmart had 4,000 stores in 2012 but will now be left with a little more than 500.

“This is a company that in the 1950s stood like a colossus over the American retail landscape,” said Craig Johnson, president of Customer Growth Partners, a retail consultancy. “Hopefully, a smaller, new Sears will be healthier.”

Others don’t share Johnson’s optimism.

“That a storied retailer, once at the pinnacle of the industry, should collapse in such a shabby state of disarray is both terrible and scandalous in equal measure,” said Neil Saunders, managing director of Global-Data Retail, in a note published Monday. “In our view, too much rot has set in at Sears to make it viable business.”

Even President Donald Trump

weighed in on Sears’ collapse, calling it “a shame.”

“Sears, Roebuck, when I was growing up, was the big deal. And it’s very sad what happened, very, very sad,” he said to reporters on Monday outside of the White House. But Trump added many of the Sears’ sites will be put to “good use” and mean a lot of jobs.

The company has struggled with outdated stores and complaints about customer service even for its once crown jewels: major appliances like washers and dryers. That’s in contrast with chains like Walmart, Target, Best Buy and Macy’s, which have been enjoying stronger sales as they benefit from a robust economy and efforts to make the shopping experience more

inviting by investing heavily in remodeling and de-cluttering their stores.

Sears Holdings will close 77 Sears stores and 65 Kmart stores near the end of the year and liquidation sales are expected to begin shortly. That’s in addition to the closure of 46 unprofitable stores that had already been announced.

Edward S. Lampert, the company’s largest shareholder, has stepped down as CEO but will remain chairman of the board. A new Office of the CEO will be responsible for managing day-to-day operations.

The company said Monday it has secured \$300 million in financing from banks to keep the

See **Sears** / Page 2B

Graphic art company recognized for excellence in print

Esprit’s Chief Joseph Days poster also wins award

Observer staff

Skip and Shannon Novakovich, owners of Esprit Graphic Communications with offices in Enterprise and Kennewick, Washington, were recently honored at the 2018 Pacific Printing Industries PrintRocks

Award celebrating excellence in print, according to a press release. More than 180 people from throughout the Northwest attended the event held at the Melody Ballroom and Event Center in Portland, paying honor to the finest printing produced in the Northwest.

Esprit received a “Best of Category” award for a full-color and gold-foiled poster produced

See **Print** / Page 2B



Contributed photo

Skip and Shannon Novakovich received an award for excellence.