

## LOCAL BRIEFING

From staff reports

**Water main break causes street closure in Elgin**

ELGIN — Highway 82 was closed in downtown Elgin near the Subway restaurant due to a water main break Thursday. Traffic was detoured around the closure. Access to/from Highway 204 was not impacted. ODOT advises residents to check TripCheck.com or call 511 / 800-977-6368 for updated conditions.

**Great Pumpkin Painting Contest set for tomorrow**

NORTH POWDER — The second annual Great Pumpkin Painting Contest will be held at 5 p.m. Oct. 27 at the Wolf Creek Grange in North Powder. For a \$1 entry fee, participants can paint a pumpkin and take it home. Prizes will be awarded in three age categories: children, age 6-12; junior, age 13-17; and senior, age 18-100.

**Local boxers make debut at boxing event**

LA GRANDE — Fighters from all over the Pacific Northwest, including three local boxers making their debut, will be featured in boxing matches beginning at 5 p.m. Oct. 27 at the Riveria Activity Center, on the corner of Y Avenue and Second Street in La Grande. Admission is \$12 at the door. Call Dave Carrello at 541-805-4607 for more information.

**RSVP by Wednesday for next Cove senior meal**

COVE — The next senior lunch in Cove will be held Nov. 6. The meals are now being served in Founders Hall at the Ascension School. Coffee and tea are available at noon, and the meal begins at 12:30 p.m. The Nov. 6 menu will feature beef stew, green beans, green salad and biscuits, with applesauce spice cake

for dessert. There is a \$5 charge per meal. RSVP by calling Imie Bristow at 541-568-4545 or Betsy Arnson at 541-568-4902 by Oct. 31.

**Ten Depot hosts annual Halloween Costume Party**

LA GRANDE — Ten Depot Street will host its annual Halloween Costume Party on Halloween featuring live music with Holly Sorenson and the Bag of Hammers. Come early for dinner, and the music begins at 8 p.m. The evening will include a costume contest with prizes, drink specials, appetizers and dinner specials.

**Farmer-Merchant Banquet is next Thursday**

LA GRANDE — The 70th annual Farmer-Merchant Banquet will be held Nov. 1 at the Blue Mountain Conference Center, 404 12th St., La Grande. A no-host social begins at 6 p.m. followed by

a catered dinner at 7 p.m. This year's theme is "Under the Harvest Moon." The evening's program will include live music, a silent auction and an awards ceremony honoring and recognizing our agricultural community. Licensed child care will be provided.

Tickets are \$35 and may be purchased at the Union County Chamber of Commerce, 207 Depot St., La Grande. Ag community members attend the banquet at no charge, but you will need to reserve your tickets in advance. For more information call 541-963-8588 or email info@visitunioncounty.org.

**Registration is open for kayaking class**

LA GRANDE — For the first time, La Grande Parks and Recreation is offering a kayaking class. The classes will be held at the Veterans' Memorial Pool in Pioneer Park from 7 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. on Wednesdays in No-

vember: Nov. 7, 14, 21 and 28. Participants will learn the strokes, maneuvers and safety of kayaking in a controlled, safe, warm environment. Gear will be provided. The class costs \$95 and is open to anyone from age 9 to adult. Children must know how to swim and have already passed the pool's swim test to be in the deep pool. Only 10 spots are available. To register or for more information, call 541-962-1352 or go to www.lagrandeparks.org and choose "current programs" under the Recreation tab.

**Wheat Foundation offers scholarships**

PENDLETON — The Oregon Wheat Foundation awards \$1,000 scholarships to qualifying high school seniors whose families are grower members of the Oregon Wheat Growers League. The scholarship is also open to students who work part-time for grower members or whose family

members are employed by OWGL grower members.

The scholarship requirements include an essay on any topic related to the wheat industry and a summary of the student's school and community involvement. Application forms are available at www.owgl.org or by contacting Sally Christensen at 541-276-7330 or schrist@owgl.org. All applications must be postmarked by Feb. 1, 2019.

**Halloween Party held at Fort Union Grange Hall Saturday**

LA GRANDE — A family-friendly Halloween party with live music by Rock & Harmony and an open mic will take place at 7 p.m. Oct. 27 at the Fort Union Grange Hall on McAlister Road. The free event will include costume contests, games and goodies. Donations will be accepted. This event is co-sponsored by Grocery Outlet, Fort Union Grange Hall and RD Mac.

# Oregon school performance ratings cast serious problems as rare, isolated

By Betsy Hammond and Bethany Barnes

The Oregonian

Oregon's new school ratings, released Wednesday, give the impression that serious performance problems are largely limited to a few districts and to nontraditional schools such as alternative programs and online charter schools.

Oregon rated just 4 percent of its elementary and middle schools as in need of a comprehensive overhaul, and more than half of those were in just three districts: Portland, Salem and Reynolds.

When it came to high schools, the Oregon Department of Education issued its lowest rating to a host of small alternative high schools that primarily serve students who arrive with spotty academic records. It also called out the state's three large online charter schools and a sprinkling of other charters as needing to do a much better job across the board.

Among Oregon's 100 largest neighborhood high schools, the state rated just one — Springfield High — in that lowest performance tier.

That's in a state that has the nation's third-lowest graduation rate. Reading, writing and math scores have been stagnant, and the new school report cards show most schools aren't on track to hit state achievement targets in 2025.

Officials at the Oregon Department of Education did not respond to multiple requests to discuss the ratings Thursday. Zeroing in on a tiny fraction of a state's schools as needing wholesale improvement is largely what Congress intended.

**New system**

Under its new rating system, designed over the past two years and implemented for the first time this month, Oregon graded schools on their English and math test scores, how many of their students came to school regularly and how well they helped English language learners master the language. Elementary and middle schools also were judged on how much year-over-year progress their typical student made in English and in math, and high schools were judged on how many students they managed to graduate in five years.

Using that system, the state gave the equivalent

of a green light to nearly 25 percent of its schools, mostly ones that serve economically comfortable neighborhoods and communities with well-educated parents.

Those 277 schools included all public schools in Lake Oswego and Sherwood and nearly all in Tigard-Tualatin, West Linn-Wilsonville and Ashland. They were told they are mostly or fully on track to hit the state's achievement targets for 2025, with no extreme weak spots they need to address.

A relatively small number of schools serving large concentrations of low-income students were among the 277 that delivered standout performances. They include Alice Ott Middle School in the David Douglas school district of east Portland, Echo Shaw Elementary in Forest Grove, Verne McKinney Elementary in Hillsboro, and Linwood Elementary and Putnam High School in Milwaukie.

The school performance ratings are of particularly high interest this year after state schools chief Colt Gill, an appointee of Gov. Kate Brown, told The Oregonian/OregonLive on Tuesday that he was going to delay releasing them until after the high-stakes Nov. 6 election. A backlash ensued, and Gill reversed himself Wednesday.

His department then released more than 2,400 individual documents showing ratings for 1,210 schools. But it did not produce the helpful summary documents and spreadsheets the agency has provided with all other large data releases going back many years. Gill indicated the last-minute change in schedule meant those materials weren't ready and said his agency would need days to prepare them.

The Oregonian/OregonLive's data team used code to download and parse the documents Wednesday afternoon and evening. The team was able to give the public a simple way starting Thursday to find a school's ratings and to compare schools.

Broadly, the performance reports portray a state in which the vast majority of schools aren't improving fast enough to hit the state's 2025 targets for reading and math achievement and graduation rates. Yet they cast the state department as most concerned about 40 or so small alternative high schools, the trio of large online charters and about a half-dozen

schools each in Portland, Reynolds and Salem.

That's at least in part a product of the new federal education law that guided the state education department as it created the performance rating system.

Although Congress ended the unpopular No Child Left Behind law and replaced it with a more permissive law known as the Every Student Succeeds Act, the new law still requires states to identify low-performing schools using a formula-driven lens and put them under scrutiny. And Every Student Succeeds, like No Child Left Behind, specifies that states should make sure to identify the bottom 5 percent of schools.

Still, Oregon's decision to judge small second-chance alternative high schools, most of which have abysmal attendance and extremely low test scores, in the same category as regular comprehensive high schools inevitably let the worst performing comprehensive high schools off the hook.

The state designed, and got federal approval, for a rating system that puts schools on an "in need of comprehensive improvement" list only if they rate in the bottom 10 percent of comparable schools for most of the factors on which they are judged. With alternative schools occupying most of that bottom 10 percent rung, nearly all Oregon's comprehensive high schools dodged the label.

**Requires extra support**

The fact that Portland Public Schools had seven schools land on the worst-performers list reflects challenging conditions for students and teachers in several of those schools, Portland educators said Thursday. They range from Sitton and Rosa Parks elementaries in St. John's to Lent Elementary in Lents.

Portland Association of Teachers President Suzanne Cohen said administrator turnover was a factor at several of them. All seven serve mostly low-income students

and children of color, many of whom speak English as their second language. So without consistent building leadership and adequate support, teachers can burn out, adding teacher turnover to the schools' challenges, she said.

"Teachers don't leave because of the students," Cohen said. "If you don't feel you can accomplish your job because the supports aren't there — that is really demoralizing."

Many of the schools serve children who face food insecurity or housing instability, which needs to be taken into account when deciding what extra resources would be help students thrive and achieve, she said.

Some of the schools serve populations of students who move often. That means a classroom can turn over from the beginning to the end of the year, she said. It's harder for children to learn an ever-changing classroom.

Many schools that face extra churn or challenges have found success with mindfulness activities, she said. But it is worth weighing how much a teacher can do in one day. An answer could be adding more counselors to a school, she said.

Richard Smith, Lent's principal, echoed Cohen's take: It comes down to supports.

"Teachers really have great intentions and they want to do right by kids and — even though the scores don't reflect that — teachers have been working really hard, but maybe have just lacked the supports they needed," Smith said. "I don't think (the results are) an accurate reflection of who are students are or who are teachers are."

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## PUBLIC SAFETY REPORT

**LA GRANDE POLICE DEPARTMENT**

Arrested: Eugene Michael Paul, 33, unknown address, was arrested on a Union County warrant charging violation of a release agreement. The alleged violation was connected to an original charge of second-degree theft.

Arrested: Destiny Kay Payne, 29, unknown address, was arrested on two Union County warrants both charging violation of a release agreement. The warrants were connected to original charges of unauthorized entry into a motor vehicle and second-degree theft.

Arrested: Kristopher Michael Dumlal, 30, unknown address, was arrested on a charge of driving under the influence of intoxicants.

Arrested: Katherine Danielle Ibarra, 36, La Grande, was arrested on charges of first-degree theft and negotiating a bad check, three counts.

Accident: Nobody was injured in a traffic accident Wednesday at Island Avenue and Monroe Avenue. The accident was reported at 5:13 p.m.

**UNION COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE**

Arrested: Taylor Alan Wilson, 27, unknown address, was arrested on a Union County warrant charging violation of a release agreement. The alleged violation was connected to original charges of driving under the influence of intoxicants and reckless driving.

Arrested: Chelsey Kaye Haywood, 30, La Grande, was arrested on a Union County warrant charging failure to appear in court on a charge of driving while suspended or revoked.

Arrested: Billy Wayne Lambert, 46, unknown address, was arrested on a parole and proba-

tion detainer.

Arrested: Michael Ray Gibbs, 51, unknown address, was arrested on a charge of second-degree trespassing and on a state parole board warrant charging a probation violation connected to an original charge of kidnapping and on a Umatilla County warrant charging a probation violation connected to an original charge of failure to report as a sex offender.

Arrested: Brianna Kay Black, 19, was arrested on a Union County warrant charging failure to appear in court.

Arrested: Kristopher Branden Logan Nye, 20, Elgin, was arrested on four Lincoln County warrants. One warrant charged distribution of a controlled substance, meth; and the other three warrants each charged possession of a controlled substance, meth.

**LA GRANDE FIRE DEPARTMENT**

The La Grande Fire Department responded to six calls for medical on Wednesday and five calls for medical and one fire alarm on Thursday.

## OBITUARIES

**Berniss A. Bechtel**

La Grande

Berniss A. Bechtel, 84, of La Grande, died Oct. 14 at her residence. A memorial service will be held at 2 p.m. Nov. 3 at Loveland Funeral Chapel. An obituary is forthcoming. Loveland Funeral Chapel & Crematory is handling the arrangements.

**Public Safety Report**

The Public Safety Report is compiled from police blotter information supplied by local law enforcement agencies and fire department reports. Individuals named as arrested and/or charged with crimes in this report are presumed innocent until proved guilty in a court of law.

**Marlene Gruis Lorenzen**

November 26 1939 - September 19, 2018

On November 26, 1939, Marlene Violet was born to Clarence and Violet Gruis in La Grande, Oregon also joining her older sister Gayle Lavonne.

On March 23, 1958 she married her high school sweetheart Terry Lorenzen in La Grande. In 1960 their only child, son Bradley J. was born.

Marlene graduated from Linn-Benton Community College with a RN degree. She began her nursing career at Good Samaritan Hospital in Corvallis, Oregon. She started as a staff nurse, then as an operating room nurse.

She and Terry retired in 1997 and moved to Sunriver, Oregon where they built a house.

They traveled extensively with family and friends.

In 2011 they moved to Eugene to be near their son Brad and his wife Lillian.

After a two year battle with cancer Marlene passed away peacefully on September 19, 2018.

Marlene's ashes will be placed in a niche at Grandview Cemetery Mausoleum in La Grande. Joining her mom and dad and also Terry's mom, dad and sister.

A pre-passing celebration of life service was conducted by Moment Ministries close friends from Corvallis on September 13, 2018.

Memorial contributions in her honor, may be sent to Pete Moore Hospice House, 4010 County Farm Road, Eugene, Oregon 97408.

Marlene is survived by husband Terry and son Brad and his wife Lillian. Grandchildren Dye and Nikko and Great-Grandchild Datu.

Please sign the guest book at [www.registerguard.com/legacy](http://www.registerguard.com/legacy)

