

Small-business & Ag HAPPENINGS

Marketplace Fresh Foods in Joseph hosts grand opening, festival

JOSEPH — A grand opening and Harvest Festival will be held at Marketplace Fresh Foods in Joseph from 2 p.m. to 5 p.m. Nov. 3. The community is invited to stop by 208 W. Main St. to meet the store's staff and its vendors. There will be live music, games for everyone, grocery prizes, hot cider and yummy samplings.

Banner Bank celebrates 10th anniversary Monday

LA GRANDE — The La Grande Banner Bank branch is hosting Business After Hours from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m. Nov. 5 to celebrate the bank's 10th anniversary. The event will include drinks, snacks and activities. The bank is located at 2720 Island Ave.

Registration for Young Farmers & Ranchers conference ends Nov. 2

REDMOND — Young farmers, ranchers and others interested in agriculture are encouraged to register for the 2018 Oregon Young Farmers & Ranchers Leadership Conference, set for Nov. 9-11 at the Eagle Crest Resort in Redmond. Open to Farm Bureau members ages 16-35, the conference is geared toward young people interested in improving their leadership and communication skills, learning about the most important issues impacting Oregon agriculture, gaining business tips from experts and networking with peers. The \$50 registration is due by Nov. 2. For the registration form and more information, go to <https://oregonfb.org/yfconference/>, email yfr@oregonfb.org or call Jaccon Taylor at 541-589-9694 or Jenny Freeborn at 970-214-8143.

UC Chamber's new winter commercial airs Friday on Facebook

LA GRANDE — The Union County Chamber of Commerce is set to publish its Northeast Oregon Winter commercial Nov. 2 on Facebook. The commercial was shot late last year and has been in the final production phase. The Chamber encourages all to view the commercial and to spread the word of its release.

Farm/ranch succession planning is focus of livestream event

BAKER CITY — On Nov. 7 from noon to 1 p.m., the Baker County Extension office will host a live-streaming event on how the Oregon Agricultural Heritage Program (OAHP) can provide incentives, tools and technical assistance for farmers and ranchers seeking to keep their land in agriculture as part of succession planning.

During the live-streaming event, Oregon farmers and ranchers will discuss trends in farm and ranch succession planning, the effects of poor succession planning on the agricultural land base, the Oregon Agricultural Heritage Program, and land conservation easements and covenants. The event is sponsored by the Agricultural Law Section of the Oregon State Bar. All are welcome. RSVP by Nov. 1 to Nellie McAdams nellie@roguefarm-corp.org.

Wallowa County Chamber accepting nominations, sponsorships for citizen awards

ENTERPRISE — Nominations for the Wallowa County Chamber Citizen Awards Banquet will be accepted through Dec. 3. For nomination forms, stop by the WC Chamber Office, 309 S. River St., Enterprise, or email info@wallowacounty.org. Businesses and organizations may also sponsor a dinner table or a tradeshow table to showcase their services. The cost of a tradeshow table is \$10, and there is no fee for sponsoring a dinner table. For information on sponsoring a tradeshow table, call Darlene Johnson at 541-426-3025. To become a table sponsor, call Cammie Hale at 541-263-1087. This year's theme is "Once Upon a Time," and the banquet will be held Jan. 27, 2019.

Geiser Grand hosts Copper Belt Winemakers Dinner

BAKER CITY — The historic Geiser Grand Hotel in Baker City will host the annual Copper Belt Winemakers Dinner at 5 p.m. Nov. 3. Local wine expert Travis Cook starts the evening with a class on

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READY TO ROLL

Momiji serves a taste of Japan with grand opening in Island City



Founder John Zhen (left) works with Momiji employees behind the sushi bar following the Japanese restaurant's grand opening in Island City Oct. 22. The Oregon-based chain restaurant serves a range of Japanese dishes, including bento boxes, teriyaki and an extensive sushi list.

Story and photos by Audrey Love, The Observer

Sushi lovers rejoice. Momiji — recently opened in Island City — offers an array of Japanese dishes, from bento boxes to teriyaki and, of course, an extensive list of sushi.

John Zhen, founder of the Oregon-based restaurant chain, helped with the store's grand opening Oct. 22, and believes his business will thrive in the area.

"We have confidence," Zhen said. "We're proud to serve the La Grande and Island City areas."

Founded in Portland in 2004, Momiji — which means "Japanese maple leaf," as reflected in their logo — is a family-owned and -operated chain, with a Zhen family member at the helm of each of the restaurant's 14 locations across Oregon. Zhi Lin is the owner of the Island City location.

"I worked with a Japanese restaurant in Portland 20 years ago — that's a long time ago (but) I knew what I was doing," Zhen said with a laugh. "So I

just had fun and (they) helped me to open the first (Momiji) — and I went from there."

Zhen's food empire doesn't stop there, though — he plans to expand Momiji to more cities along Interstate 84, with potential locations in Ontario, Baker City, Hermiston, The Dalles and Hood River.

Despite the presence and potential competition of other Asian restaurants in the area, Zhen believes Momiji will prosper because "we know what we're doing" when it comes to sushi. Zhen also emphasized price — noting that in his opinion, other area restaurants overcharge for a basic sushi roll.

"Our food is affordable, fresh and we specialize in sushi," Zhen said. "We're working with Grocery

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Momiji's most popular sushi roll, the "Salem" roll, is one of many sushi options the restaurant now offers in Island City, located adjacent to Walmart in the former Primo's Pizza building.

Accidents highlight dangers, draw of US West's old mines

By Lindsay Whitehurst
The Associated Press

EUREKA, Utah — Underneath the mountains and deserts of the U.S. West lie hundreds of thousands of abandoned mines, an underground world that can hold serious danger and unexpected wonder.

They are a legacy of the region's prospecting past, when almost anyone could dig a mine and then walk away, with little cleanup required, when it stopped producing.

In Utah alone, the state is trying to seal more than 10,000 open mines with cinderblocks and metal grates after people

have died in rock falls, all-terrain-vehicle crashes and poisonous air over the past three decades. Just this month in Arizona, a prospector broke his left leg and ankle after plunging to the bottom of an old mine shaft. He spent nearly three days there with no food or water, fending off rattlesnakes before a friend heard his cries for help.

Still, not everyone wants to see the mines closed. For years, a dedicated subculture of explorers has been slipping underground to see tunnels lined with sparkling quartz, century-old rail cars and caverns

that open in the earth like buried ballrooms.

"Nobody has walked the path you're walking for 100 years," said Jeremy MacLee, who uses old mining documents and high-tech safety equipment to find and explore forgotten holes, mostly in Utah.

He also lends his expertise to searches for missing people. That's how he got to know Bill Powell, who looked for his 18-year-old son, Riley, for months before the teenager and his girlfriend were found dead in a mine shaft outside the small town of Eureka.

The teens' families

formed a close bond with MacLee and other volunteer searchers. Despite his painful memories, Bill Powell decided to see what draws his friend to those dark recesses deep in the desert.

"It's a whole different life. The underground life," Powell said.

On a recent day, he and MacLee joined a group of friends in front of a mountainside opening near Eureka, wearing helmets, oxygen meters and strong lights, and a carrying stash of extra batteries. Cool air blasted from the opening, cutting through the desert heat.

The group walked

between metal tracks that once carried ore carts, making their way through a tunnel shored up in places with squared-off timbers. After nearly a mile, the railcar tracks suddenly dropped into an abyss as the tunnel opened wide into a huge cavern. A hundred years ago, it would be a bustling scene lit with candles and carbide lights, as miners climbed a scaffolding the size of a seven-story building to drill out lead and silver.

Now, it is silent and pitch-black, illuminated only by the searching headlamp beams.

Bill Powell thought of

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