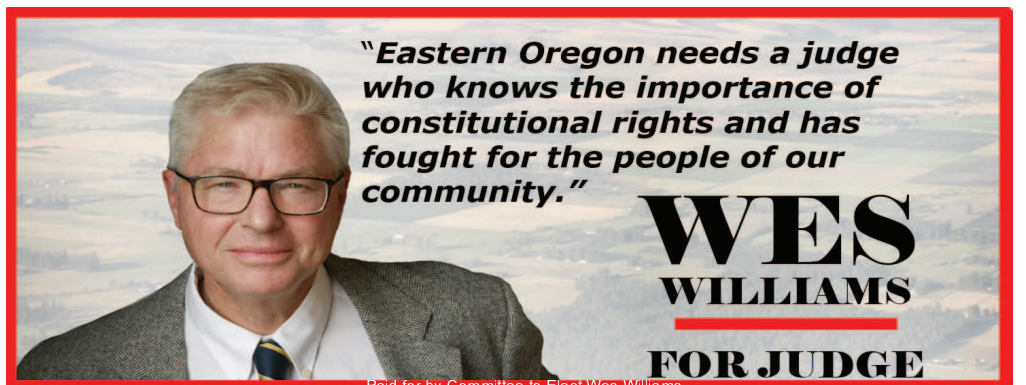


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Market Place Family Fresh to open March 1

By Cherise Kaechele
The Observer

From receiving a controversial \$500,000 loan from the Urban Renewal Agency in 2014 to its well-publicized closure in February of this year due to bankruptcy after just 15 months in business, the short history of the grocery store at the corner of Fourth Street and

Adams Avenue in La Grande has been a roller coaster.

Yet Al Adelsberger, the original and current developer of the project, remains confident the store will fill a much-needed niche in downtown La Grande — and his optimism will again be put to the test when the store reopens March 1 as

Market Place Family Fresh. Adelsberger wants the community to give this grocery another chance. He and two new owners, Marco Rennie and David Yount, have learned from the mistakes that were made in the past, and while the re-vamped store will look and feel very different, it goes forward with its original

intent: to be the neighborhood grocery store.

The developer noted the construction projects on Adams Avenue — like the new apartments in the Pennington building and The Landing Hotel expansion — have increased the need for a downtown grocery store, while at the same time bringing more nearby

shoppers.

According to Adelsberger, for this store to succeed, it must make \$50,000 in sales every week. In comparison, larger grocery stores must make more than \$200,000 in sales. It's not an impossible feat, and he believes the changes made to the store along with the continuing economic development

downtown will make that possible.

When the former grocery store closed in February, it was announced that it would reopen in 90 days. That deadline came and went, but Adelsberger emphasized the space has been in constant transition since it closed.

"It's (been) getting an
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STARS OF AGRICULTURAL COMMUNITY SALUTED AT UNION COUNTY FARMER-MERCHANT BANQUET

By Dick Mason
The Observer

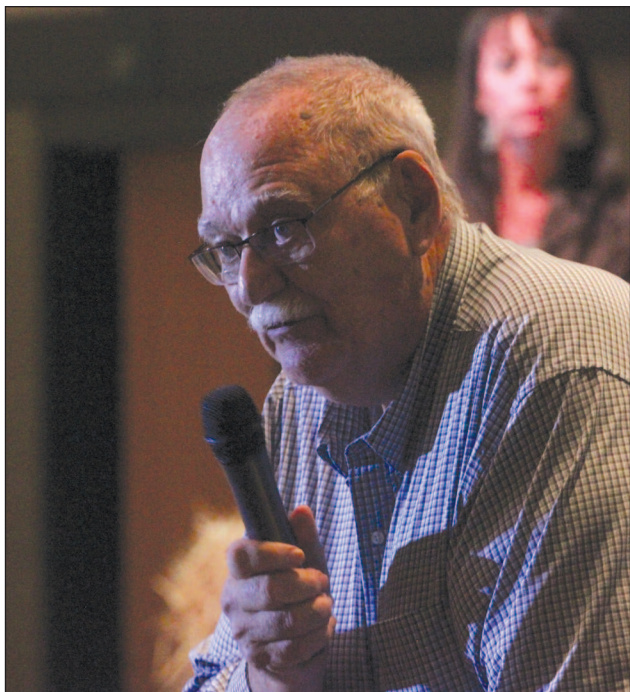
A Union resident who has planted enough trees to fill a 20,000-acre forest, a Cove farmer cutting down on energy consumption by staying near high-tech's cutting edge and a Summerville landowner helping a portion of Dry Creek twist again.

These are among the eight Union County men and women honored at the 70th annual Union County Farmer-Merchant Banquet Thursday at the Blue Mountain Conference Center in La Grande.

Dan Hoyt of Union, who has helped plant at least 20 million trees over 60 years, received the Forest Steward of the Year Award.

"I am a little embarrassed and very proud of the honor," Hoyt said prior to the banquet, put on by the Union County Chamber of Commerce.

Jamie Knight of the Oregon Department of Forestry, who has worked with Hoyt for 15 years, spoke movingly of Hoyt during her introduction of him, referring to his inspiring nature.



Cherise Kaechele / The Observer

Clockwise from left: Union County Commissioner Steve McClure was honored Thursday night with the Distinguished Service to Agriculture Award at the Farmer-Merchant Banquet ceremony. McClure was recognized for his role in helping the agriculture community. Jamie Knight hugs Dan Hoyt, recipient of the Forest Steward of the Year Award. Hoyt has planted at least 20 million trees over 60 years. Mary Aiwohi received the Good Steward of the Year Award for her role in helping restore a quarter-mile portion of Dry Creek on her property in Summerville.

"He has touched my soul," Knight said.

She said Hoyt is one of the kindest people she has met and someone who is quick to defend others.

"He would be the first to stand up for you if he thought you might be

harmed," Knight said.

Many of the millions of trees Hoyt has grown were planted on Oregon Department of Forestry land. The trees he raises are kept in coolers he constructs and about 70 percent of the trees are

ponderosa pines.

Union was also represented at the banquet's honor ceremony by John Hefner, a rancher who was named Cattleman of the Year. Hefner has raised cattle for 45 years and said the quality of the people in

his line of work are what make it rewarding.

"It's a good livelihood but you are not going to get rich working at it," Hefner said.

He loves his work but said it presents its share of
See **Banquet** / Page 2A

Elgin High School journalism class hands-on in producing student newspaper

■ Husky Tracks gains traction as student-produced newspaper

By Audrey Love
The Observer

Slow and steady is the mantra Elgin High School's journalism class has been following in the growth of its student-produced newspaper, Husky Tracks.

Guided by English teacher/editor Cameron Livermore, a staff of 19 students work hands-on throughout the production process for each monthly issue — from page design to printing, folding and cutting their newspaper in-house.

"They've been enthusiastic about it," Livermore said of his students' response to the paper so far. "I've got some students who are really running with it and are interested in (the newspaper) and enjoying it."

Husky Tracks and the journalism class itself are both relatively new additions. Livermore, now in his third year of teaching, established the class after his first year at Elgin High School. Post-graduation from Eastern Oregon University, Livermore worked as a news and sports reporter for the Othello Outlook, a three-person newspaper in Othello, Washington. After a year of reporting, however, Livermore decided to alter his career trajectory.

"When I moved back (to Elgin) and decided to become a teacher, journalism was still a big passion of mine and I wanted to make sure the kids had some sort of product they could create to get their voices out there," Livermore said.

Husky Tracks was established in September 2017 and centers on events and topics pertaining to the high school, though eventually Livermore intends to expand the paper's reach.

"From the start, I envisioned the journalism class as a way of communicating with the

See **Elgin** / Page 3A

Union and Wallowa county voter turnout higher than state average

By Max Denning
The Observer

Voter turnout in Union and Wallowa counties is outpacing the statewide turnout as of the morning of Nov. 1.

With four days until election day, 28.5 percent of ballots have been returned in Oregon. In Union County 30.2 percent of ballots have been returned, and in Wallowa County 36.3 percent of ballots are in.

Union County Clerk Robin Church said she's not sure why Union County often has higher

turnout than the rest of the state. She said the voter turnout so far has been about average.

In March 2015, Gov. Kate Brown signed the Oregon Motor Voter bill, making Oregon the first state to have automatic voter registration. In the first six months of the law being in place, the automatic registration program registered 206,554 Oregonians through the DMV. The law shifted the state from an opt-in process to an opt-out process, requiring individuals who do not want to be sent a ballot to opt out of receiving one.

In a new study authored by professors at Northern Illinois University, Oregon was ranked as the easiest state to vote in. The study took into account factors such as registration deadlines, ease of registration, voter ID laws, convenience of voting and restrictions on voting. Oregon's Motor Voter Act vaulted it to the top of the list, in addition to its vote-by-mail system.

Along the partisan divide in Union County, Democrats are outnumbered by Republicans by almost 4,000 registered voters.

Locally, both parties are turning out in similar rates. Among 3,789 registered Democrats, 1,463 have voted so far, a turnout rate of 38.6 percent. Among 7,579 registered Republicans, 2,807 have voted so far, a turnout rate of 37 percent. Unaffiliated voters have the worst turnout rate so far, with only 14.7 percent of the 5,245 registered voters returning their ballots so far.

In Wallowa County, the turnout rates are elevated, but similar. Of the registered Democrats in the

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