

LOCAL BRIEFING

From staff reports

Admission to Holiday Market benefits emergency food bank

LA GRANDE — The annual ESA-Delta Epsilon Holiday Market will be open from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Nov. 24 at the Blue Mountain Conference Center, 404 12th St., La Grande. The Holiday Market will feature a variety of crafts and homemade items. Snacks and food will also be for sale. Santa is due to arrive at 10 a.m. Admission is canned food or packaged diapers, to be donated to the DHS Emergency Food Bank.

Tickets to UC annual dinner must be purchased by Nov. 30

UNION — The Union County Cattlemen's annual dinner will be held Dec. 8 at the Stock Show Clubhouse in Union. Doors open at 6 p.m. for a social hour. Introductions and the evening's program will begin at 6:50 p.m. and

dinner will be served at 7 p.m. Tickets, which are \$27, are available at the Extension Service office and must be purchased by Nov. 30. The event will have live entertainment and a guest speaker and is open to the public. For more information call Rodger Huffman at 541-805-1617 or Pat Larson at 541-963-9387. The group will not have a business meeting in December.

Attention winter recreation enthusiasts

LA GRANDE — EOU's Outdoor Adventure Program Director Michael Hatch will host a free evening of avalanche awareness training from 6:30 p.m. to 8 p.m. Nov. 28 in Lewis Auditorium in Zabel Hall on the EOU campus. Presented in partnership with the Wallowa Avalanche Center, the clinic will focus on the fundamentals of recreating safely in winter environments where avalanche hazards

exist. Snowmobile riders are especially encouraged to attend. For more information about this and other OAP events, visit eou.edu/outdoor or contact Hatch at 541-962-3621 or mhatch@eou.edu.

Do you need assistance with a legal issue?

LA GRANDE — Legal Aid Services of Oregon will give a free brief presentation at noon Nov. 28 at the Union County Senior Center, 1504 N. Albany St., La Grande. All are welcome to come learn how Legal Aid can provide assistance to those facing legal problems.

Public input sought on Statewide Housing Plan

LA GRANDE — Oregon Housing and Community Services is seeking public feedback on the Statewide Housing Plan's priorities to guide investments over the

next five years. Public input received will be used to prepare a final version of the plan to the Oregon Housing Stability Council in early 2019. Zee Koza, of the Oregon House Stability Council, will host public meeting from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. Nov. 29 in the Community Room at Cook Memorial Library, 2006 Fourth St., La Grande. For more information, go to www.oregon.gov/ohcs/pages/oshp.aspx.

Tree of Lights remembrance ceremony set

LA GRANDE — Remembrance cards for the Grande Ronde Hospice's annual fundraising Tree of Lights are now available for a suggested \$5 donation. The cards will be represented by lights on the Tree of Lights, which will be lit during a remembrance ceremony at 5:30 p.m. Dec. 13 in Pat's Alley, downtown La Grande. An incorrect date

was previously announced. The tree will remain on display throughout the holidays. The donations help GRH Hospice fulfill the needs of patients and their families throughout the year. Remembrance Cards are now available at Fitzgerald Flowers, Looking Glass Books and GRH Hospice. For details, call 541-963-CARE.

Special needs families may reserve time with sensory-friendly Santa

LA GRANDE — The Autism Society of Oregon is hosting a sensory-friendly Santa event for all special needs kids and their families Dec. 14 at the Tri-County Equipment Building, 62460 Commerce Road, La Grande. A photographer will be there to take pictures with Santa and Mrs. Claus, and snacks and activities will be provided. The number of families per

half hour will be limited to ensure a quieter, less crowded experience, so reservations are required. To reserve your time, call Julie Dudley at 541-562-6137.

Dec. 2 is deadline for entry to 'Gift of Art' sale

JOSEPH — Josephy Center for Arts and Culture will hold its annual "Gift of Art" sale Dec. 7. Art will be bid on with half of the proceeds benefiting Josephy's youth art program. Artists will receive the other 50 percent of the sales. The deadline for entry is Dec. 2. Artists may call or email Megan Wolfe at 541-432-0505 or coordinator@josephy.org for more information.

The bidding runs all day and ends at 8:30 p.m. on Dec. 7. The public is invited to come by and bid on art. There will be food and drinks available.

OBITUARIES

Donald B. Bloom

Island City
1943-2018

Donald Bert Bloom, 74, of Island City, died Nov. 15 at his residence. A celebration of his life will be held from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. Dec. 8 at the La Grande American Legion.

Donald was born Dec. 10, 1943, in Pendleton, to Richard and Alberta (Thompson) Bloom. He resided in Pendleton, Cove, La Grande and Island City. Donald graduated from La Grande High School and later attended Blue Mountain Community College. He married Judy Jensen.

Donald was employed with Lynch Motors and

Goss Motors. He enjoyed hunting, fishing, car racing, river rafting, snow skiing, water skiing and bull riding. Donald was a member of the Elks Lodge and the Eagles Lodge.

Donald is survived by his children and their spouses, Claudia and John Bigler of Baker City and Brian and Kim Bloom of Eugene; sister and brother-in-law, Sharon and Dick Hohstadt of La Grande; three grandchildren; and two nieces and nephews.

He was preceded in death by his wife, Judy; parents, Richard and Alberta; and grandson, Jacob.

Online condolences may be made to the family at www.lovelandfuneralchapel.com.

J.D. Casey

Island City

J.D. Casey, 88, of Island City, died Nov. 19 at a local care facility. A memorial service will be held at 2 p.m. Nov. 24 at the Island City Faith Center. An obituary is forthcoming. Loveland Funeral Chapel & Crematory is handling the arrangements.

Local funerals and visitations

The Observer publishes obituaries that conform to its obituary policy at no cost. Obituaries must be under 450 words and are edited for newspaper style.

PUBLIC SAFETY REPORT

LA GRANDE FIRE DEPARTMENT

La Grande Fire Department responded to nine calls for medical on Wednesday and 17 calls for medical on Thursday.

UNION COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

Arrested: Robert Elwood Kast, 31, unknown address, was arrested on a Union County warrant charging failure to appear in court on charges of second-degree criminal trespassing and second-degree criminal mischief.

OREGON STATE POLICE

Arrested: Jane Patricia Sands, 72, unknown address, was arrested on charge of driving under the influence of intoxicants-drugs.

Cited: Curtis Dean Cox, 51, unknown address, was cited on a charge of third-degree theft.

Arrested: James E. Moss, 50, La Grande, was arrested on charges of a parole violation and

driving while suspended.

Arrested: Tony R. Hollenbeck, 47, Graham, Washington, was arrested on charges of delivery of marijuana, in a public place or household and import/export of marijuana.

Arrested: Brandy Lynette Pyle, 43, Gilbert, Arizona, was arrested on charges delivery of marijuana in a public place or household, manufacture of marijuana and import/export of marijuana items.

Arrested: Margaret Marie Leverenz, 53, Bonita Springs, Florida, was arrested on a charge driving under the influence of intoxicants.

Arrested: Adrian Thomas, Schnepf, 25, La Grande, was arrested on a warrant out of Idaho's Elmore County.

Arrested: Christopher Everett Crader, 35, Hermiston, was arrested on charges of driving under the influence of intoxicants-alcohol, 2 counts; reckless driving; and recklessly endangering another person, two counts.

MENUS

UNION COUNTY SENIOR CENTER

1504 N. ALBANY ST.

LA GRANDE LUNCH MENU NOV. 26-30

MONDAY: chicken-fried steak, mashed potatoes, country gravy, steamed vegetables, salad greens, dessert.

TUESDAY: baked potato bar with chili and cheese sauce, salad greens, fruit, dessert.

WEDNESDAY: chicken cordon bleu over rice pilaf, steamed vegetables, Jell-O, rolls, dessert.

THURSDAY: almond chicken, rice pilaf, steamed cauliflower, cucumber and sweet onion salad, rolls, dessert. (Alternate meal: beef liver and onions.)

FRIDAY: mushroom-Swiss burgers, fries, pasta salad, fresh fruit, dessert. (Alternate meal: hot dogs and chips.)

Plan floated to return sea otters to the Oregon Coast

■ It's been more than a century since sea otters were hunted to near extinction along the U.S. West Coast

By Tom Banse

Northwest News Network

It's been more than a century since sea otters were hunted to near extinction along the U.S. West Coast. The cute animals were successfully reintroduced along the Washington, British Columbia and California coasts, but an attempt to bring them back to Oregon in the early 1970s failed.

Now a new nonprofit has formed to try again.

"For about 110 years, there's been a big hole in our environment," said Peter Hatch, a Siletz tribal member living in Corvallis. "The sea otter has been missing from the Oregon Coast."

Hatch recently joined the board of a new nonprofit dedicated to bringing the sea otter back to Oregon waters. The group is named the Elakha Alliance — "elakha" is the Clatsop-Chinookan word for sea otter.

"We are very heartened by the idea that sea otters could be brought back to this part of the coast, brought back to make their range whole again and to make this place whole again," Hatch said in an interview at a bluff overlooking the ocean in Newport.

He pointed out to the sea toward Otter Rock, where a hunter killed one of the last wild Oregon sea otters for its fur more than a century ago, Hatch said. At one time, a soft, luxurious sea otter robe would have been among the most valuable possessions a Siletz person could own, he mused.

Hatch said other people are excited by the prospect

of reintroducing the otters. Sea otters contribute to healthy kelp forests by eating sea urchins, and bring balance to the nearshore ecosystem he said. Hatch believes they would be great "ambassadors" for the Oregon Coast.

But excitement is not the unanimous response.

"The notion of full-scale reintroduction of otters makes me feel very apprehensive because we don't know how that will affect commercial fisheries," said Newport crabber Bob Eder.

Eder said he is mindful that sea otters have remarkable charisma. But they're also known for their big appetites and a diet that includes Dungeness crab.

Eder's concerned that reintroduction could change his industry.

"Unlike the crab fishermen, (the otters) don't take just the large mature males that have already reproduced," Eder said in an interview at the bayfront. "They take the females. They eat indiscriminately."

The director of the Oregon Dungeness Crab Commission made the same points in a separate interview last week. Dungeness crab represents the single most valuable commercial

fishery in Oregon.

"We need to really study this because we may be displacing one mammal — fishermen — with the reintroduction of another," Eder said.

Elakha Alliance Board Chair Bob Bailey predicts that 100 reintroduced otters would make a negligible difference for the overall commercial harvest.

A lab at Oregon State University's marine science center in Newport is currently studying whether society and the marine environment are ready for sea otter reintroduction. Masters student Dominique Kone is examining ocean conditions.

"Is there suitable habitat?" Kone asked. "Is there enough prey? We know sea otters are constantly eating because of their high metabolism."

Kone's initial assessment is that some spots off the coast, particularly the southern Oregon Coast, look pretty good.

Kone said he would look for any lessons to be learned from the earlier reintroduction effort in Oregon. His graduate adviser, OSU professor Leigh Torres, said it is something of a mystery why the 1970s reintroduction did not suc-

ceed in Oregon as it did in Washington and California.

"What's interesting about that previous, failed reintroduction effort is that otters were doing well to begin with for the first couple of years," Torres said. "They were feeding, actually having pups and doing well. Then they sort of split town and just weren't seen again."

The founder and director of the new Elakha Alliance guesses it could take many years to get the green light to reintroduce sea otters along Oregon's coast.

"We are very early in the game," Bailey said. "We haven't even really scoped out the 'What would it take' type of discussion, the logistics. Where would these animals come from? Where would they go? What would the impacts be?"

Bailey organized a one-day symposium in Newport last month with scientists, agencies, tribal representatives and interested citizens to talk about the existing state of the science. He said the next step is to draw up a strategic plan for how the Elakha Alliance should proceed.

The state Department of Fish and Wildlife and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, meanwhile, are

noncommittal.

A USFWS spokeswoman said many public meetings lie ahead if the reintroduction idea gains momentum. Federal biologists who are monitoring the sea otters along the Washington and central California coasts say those populations are healthy, but they are not colonizing Oregon on their own.

"There's more support for active reintroduction than waiting for natural dispersal," concluded Danielle Moser, wildlife program coordinator for the environmental group Oregon Wild, after attending the Elakha Alliance science symposium last month. "The sentiment was that active reintroduction is needed if we want sea otters in Oregon anytime soon."

The current Washington state population of around 2,000 animals stems from

59 sea otters that were relocated to the Olympic Peninsula coast from Alaska's Aleutian Islands in 1969 and 1970. Washington's sea otters are now spread out between Point Grenville on the Quinalt Reservation and Pillar Point in the Strait of Juan de Fuca. Occasionally, one or two Washington sea otters are spotted exploring Oregon waters, but those wandering animals have not stayed.

This fall, the Oregon Coast Aquarium in Newport launched a capital campaign to expand its sea otter holding facilities and build a marine mammal rehabilitation center.

Both of those would be useful for a sea otter reintroduction campaign if one is eventually launched. The Oregon Coast Aquarium is currently home to three sea otters that rank among its most popular exhibits.

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