

Small-business & Ag HAPPENINGS

KS Fitmeals hangs up the towel

ISLAND CITY — According to the company's Facebook page, KS Fitmeals has closed its doors. The post reads, "We have truly enjoyed serving you all over the past three years. We are sad to say that after the Holidays, we will not be returning to the kitchen." The meal service, based in Island City, provided homemade entrees and desserts with an emphasis on healthy eating. The food was prepared in Island City, and customers picked up their weekly orders or had the meals delivered for an extra fee.

Fundamentals of Excel class targets small business owners

ENTERPRISE — A Microsoft Excel Fundamentals class will be held from 3 p.m. to 5 p.m. Jan. 15, 22 and 29 at Wallowa Resources, 401 NE First St., Enterprise. Participants will learn how to set up and save workbooks and worksheets, enter data and use "auto fills" in cells. Information will include format and customization of workbooks, sorting, hiding and filtering data and printing the sheet you desire with the correct information and sizing.

The course is offered by the BMCC Small Business Development Center. The cost is \$99. To register, go to <https://conta.cc/2QyH1PC>. More information is available from Andrea Fowler at 541-278-5833 or afowler@bluecc.edu.

Are you a beginning farmer?

SALEM — One of the Farm Service Agency's missions is to help beginning farmers finance agricultural enterprises. Under these designated farm loan programs, FSA can provide financing to eligible applicants through either direct or guaranteed loans. FSA defines a beginning farmer as a person who: has operated a farm for not more than 10 years; will materially and substantially participate in the operation of the farm; agrees to participate in a loan assessment, borrower training and financial management program sponsored by FSA; and does not own a farm in excess of 30 percent of the county's average size farm. Additional program information, loan applications and other materials are available at local USDA Service Centers as well as at www.fsa.usda.gov.

Oregon Farm Bureau issues statement on Farm Bill passage

SALEM — On Dec. 12, the Oregon Farm Bureau joined American Farm Bureau and farm and ranch families around the nation in applauding the passage of the 2018 Farm Bill by the U.S. House of Representatives, after approval by the U.S. Senate the previous day. The bill was signed into law by President Donald Trump on Dec. 20.

The following statement may be attributed to Oregon Farm Bureau:

"After much debate, the 2018 Farm Bill passed the House of Representatives by a margin of 367-49, with 17 not voting. This comes on the heels of its passage yesterday by the Senate. Six of Oregon's seven-member congressional delegation voted in favor of the bill.

"The legislation supports farmers and ranchers, protects crop insurance and conservation efforts, provides specialty crop programs, invests in efforts to expand foreign markets, protects animal health, and prioritizes agricultural research and rural development.

"The bill is critical to providing all stakeholders, including Oregon's farmers, ranchers, and consumers, with consistent policy for the next five years, along with the many sectors and industries that rely on them."

Oregon Farm Bureau is a grassroots, non-partisan, nonprofit, general farm organization representing the interests of farming and ranching families in the public and policymaking arenas. First established in Oregon at the county level in 1919 and the state level in 1932, Farm Bureau is organized in all 36 counties. Oregon Farm Bureau President Sharon Waterman is an OFB Hall of Fame honoree and operates a Century Ranch raising sheep, cattle, and timber in Bandon. She is OFB's 16th president.

Disneyland raising prices, cheapest daily ticket over \$100

LOS ANGELES — Disneyland Resort is raising prices ahead of the scheduled opening of a Star Wars-themed expansion, with the cheapest daily ticket costing more than \$100.

Less than a year ago, prices were raised by up to 18 percent. The prices that took effect Sunday for tickets, annual passes and parking represent increases of up to 25 percent.

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Farm Service Agency releases shutdown update

Observer staff

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Due to the federal government shutdown and the accompanying lapse in appropriation, USDA Farm Service Agency county offices have not been operating since Dec. 28, 2018. The following information was provided by FSA in a Jan. 4 press release.

Market Facilitation Program: Market Facilitation Program payments for producers that have already certified production with the Farm Service Agency will continue beyond Jan. 1. Sign-up for the Market Facilitation Program ends on Jan. 15. Secretary Perdue will determine if the deadline should be extended. You do not need to be finished with harvest to sign up. Farmers have until May 1 to certify production.

FSA Loan Guidance: All commodity loan activity ceased Jan. 3. This includes any loan activity conducted by DMA's, LSA's and CMA's. Access to the following automated FSA systems will no longer be available: Commodity Loan Processing System (CLPS), Cotton On-Line Processing System (COPS), Automated Cotton Reporting System (ACRS) and Centralized Cotton Redemption (CCR).

Commodities Pledged as Collateral for a Commodity Loan: Farm-stored commodities pledged as Commodity Credit Corporation collateral can be marketed (moved for purchase to a buyer) or fed. However, the following activities will not be processed while the government is shut down: loan repayments,



WesCom News Service file photo

USDA Farm Service Agency county offices have not been operating since Dec. 28, 2018, due to the shutdown.

loan disbursements, refunds and termination of transfers. During the shutdown, move-

ment of collateral will be treated the same as loan collateral

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Eastern Oregon Visitor's Association plans to hire a new executive director for the first time in its history

■ Alice Trindle, who has held the position for three decades, retired from the organization

By **Francisca Benitez**
For The Observer

Eastern Oregon Visitor's Association is beginning the search for a new executive director after the retirement of Alice Trindle. Trindle has held the position since the organization was founded in 1991.

EOVA is a regional destination marketing organization that promotes tourism in 11 Eastern Oregon counties, according to Timothy Bishop, president of EOVA's board.

EOVA will create a committee to search for candidates for the position within the next seven to 10 days, according to Bishop. Then a final job description will be completed, and

the board is hoping to have the position filled in the next three to six months.

"We're pretty sure this is going to be an arduous process, trying to find a great candidate who can bring the skill set that EOVA needs to move forward," Bishop said.

Former board member Michelle Liberty is serving as the interim executive director in Trindle's place.

"Alice's shoes are going to be big to fill. She has literally been the face of EOVA since before we were EOVA," Bishop said. "That's an incredible legacy for tourism in the region but also tourism at the state level."

Trindle, who lives on a ranch

in Haines, said her decision to retire was a result of the restructuring of the organization as it moves forward with a plan to renew a commitment to work with Travel Oregon.

"I actually had intended to retire in 2020, but circumstances changed, and EOVA is seeking new leadership," Trindle wrote in an email to The Observer.

Bishop said EOVA is currently in the process of submitting a "request for proposal" to Travel Oregon to continue in the same capacity for the next six years.

"As we go into this next phase of tourism development, one of our challenges is to reorganize the organization, and part of that is making the transition from having a contracted regional director to having a

couple of staff people," Bishop said.

As the only executive director in EOVA's history, Trindle has seen the organization change and grow.

"When we began in 1991, EOVA's total annual budget, without grants, was about \$30,000. In 2018, with the assistance of the Regional Cooperative Marketing Program funds, the annual budget was over \$350,000," she wrote.

She said some of the proudest moments in her three-decade-long career with the program were seeing the economic impact of the tourism industry in Eastern Oregon grow, helping establish the statewide lodging tax, being awarded the Governor's Tourism Award twice, and developing the region's scenic

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Government shutdown won't delay tax refunds

By **Marcy Gordon and Jill Colvin**
The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Taxpayers who are owed refunds will be paid on time, despite the government shutdown that has closed many federal agencies, a Trump administration official said Monday as concern mounted over the risk that the payments could be delayed.

The acting director of the White House budget office, Russell Vought, said customary rules will be changed to make the payments possible. He told reporters that an "indefinite appropriation" was available for the refunds, which would go out as normal.

As it dragged through a third week, the partial government shutdown could not have come at a worse time for the Internal Revenue Service. Tax-filing season officially begins Jan. 28, and while those who owe Uncle Sam will still have to pay up by April 15, people who are due to receive money back have worried about whether the closure could postpone their payments.

About three-quarters of taxpayers receive

annual refunds, giving them an incentive to file their returns early. Many lower-income people count on refunds as their biggest cash infusion of the year.

The IRS said late Monday that it will recall a large number of furloughed employees to process returns. They will probably work without pay. Under the previous rules, hundreds of billions of dollars in refunds could be delayed because funding would not be available.

Some experts question whether the Trump administration has the legal authority to reverse those earlier policies to allow the government to issue refunds during a shutdown. Vought framed the move as part of President Donald Trump's goal to make the shutdown "as painless as possible."

The administration's announcement came as House Speaker Nancy Pelosi signaled her intention to begin passing individual bills to reopen federal agencies in the coming days, starting with the Treasury Department, which includes the IRS, to ensure Americans receive their refunds.

Some Senate Republicans have been growing increasingly anxious about the extended shutdown and could support such legislation from the Democratic-led House.

With the White House announcement on refunds, "They're reversing a long-standing legal position," said Howard Gleckman, senior fellow and tax expert at the Urban Institute. But, he added, "Who's going to sue? It would be hard to show damages. ... So they might be able to get away with it."

In 2011, the chief counsel at the IRS concluded that such payments were legally allowed during a shutdown. At the time, the White House Office of Management and Budget, under President Barack Obama, rejected that position and directed the IRS not to pay refunds during a shutdown. But the IRS said Monday in a news release that the OMB had reviewed the issue at the Treasury's Department's request and now agrees with the IRS counsel's position.

The IRS said it will recall a "significant portion" of its roughly 52,000 furloughed

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What air travelers should know about the shutdown

By **David Koenig**
The Associated Press

DALLAS — The partial government shutdown is starting to affect air travel.

Over the weekend, some airports had long lines at checkpoints, apparently caused by a rising number of security officers calling in sick as they face the prospect of missing their first paycheck this week.

Safety inspectors aren't even on the job. A Federal Aviation Administration spokesman said Monday that inspectors are being called back to work on a case-by-case basis, with a priority put on inspecting airline fleets.

So far, the most visible signs

of the shutdown — in its 18th day Tuesday — include the closure of some government buildings and national parks and trash overflowing bins on the National Mall in front of the Capitol.

By increasingly affecting air travel, however, the pain will be felt more widely.

Here are some common questions about the shutdown's impact on airports and travel, along with the answers:

WHO IS SUPPOSED TO KEEP WORKING?

About 10,000 air traffic controllers who work for the Federal Aviation Administration, about 51,000 Transportation Security Administration

officers, and an undisclosed number of federal air marshals have been told to keep reporting to work because they are deemed essential. Government employees have always been paid after past shutdowns ended, and that is the widespread expectation this time too.

ARE THEY SHOWING UP?

TSA acknowledges that more screeners are calling in sick at some airports, including Dallas-Fort Worth International. It gave few numbers but issued a statement Friday saying that more have been missing work since the Christmas and New Year's holidays. The TSA said the effect was "minimal."

Then over the weekend, travelers reported longer checkpoint lines at some airports, including LaGuardia in New York.

On Monday, TSA tweeted that agents screened 2.22 million passengers nationwide on Sunday, which it called a "historically busy day due to holiday travel." TSA said only about 220,000 travelers waited at least 15 minutes at checkpoints, while 0.2 percent — fewer than 5,000 — waited at least 30 minutes.

HOW WILL TSA RESPOND TO NO-SHOWS?

Airport screeners start around \$24,000 and most

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