

SIM MAN

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Michael Shepherd, biomedical equipment technician and training center faculty at GRH, said the ability to practice any medical emergency situation with a robot that can respond immediately to stimuli is a great way to learn and practice difficult skills. "The advanced realism of the Sim Man 3G lets you practice a huge spectrum of skills," he said. "(Trainees are) practicing these skills in a safe, risk-free environment and they're not dealing under the same kind of stress (as they would in real life), so

when they actually have to apply those skills, it's been honed into muscle memory and they know exactly what to do." Elliot and Shepherd hope to soon expand their simulation program to other fields in the Grande Ronde Valley community, such as firefighters, police officers, dentists, chiropractors and more. But for now, the main participants of Sim Man training are nurses and doctors of GRH. Elliot also wants to eventually build a training lab at the hospital in order to make Sim Man scenarios seem even more life-like to participants. "Our ultimate goal is to get a

simulation lab so we can operate everything behind the scenes and have a patient room and the people who are participating, they don't see us," she said. "We want to get everybody to a higher level so they get comfortable with taking care of all types of patients." The Grande Ronde Hospital Foundation, a nonprofit dedicated to supporting community-funded projects to improve patient care, is footing the \$136,000 bill for the Sim Man and its programming packages. The Sim Man is the featured project for the foundation's annual gala on March 2, and all proceeds and donations will go toward funding

the training robot. Patrick Flynn, manager of the GRH Foundation, said the 2019 gala, themed as "A Night Under the Stars," will feature a meal cooked by renowned local chef Merlyn Baker, entertainment by comedian and Star Search-winner Taylor Mason, a wine pull and a silent auction, the grand prize of which is the chance to name the hospital's new Sim Man. "More than anything, the gala is about raising awareness for the foundation and the projects that we do," Flynn said. "We're making sure we're going after projects and equipment that are going to have an impact on the care and

that people are going to benefit from. If somebody donated their hard-earned money to the foundation, we want to make sure that donation is worthwhile." A single gala ticket costs \$125, but two cost only \$200. Flynn said the ticket price may seem high, but it's well worth it for the caliber of the event's food, entertainment and atmosphere. "Sometimes people might see the price of the ticket and not want to come, but they need to think of the value that they get out of a great night," he said. "It helps to contribute to a really awesome cause of making sure we can offer the best medical care here in the valley." ■



Dick Mason/The Observer

The Looney Tunes characters Sylvester the Cat and Tweety are two of the cartoons reproduced by Dan Kramer.



Dick Mason/The Observer

Dan Kramer uses a bandsaw to make plywood cutouts of cartoon characters.

CARTOONIST

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Kramer said sometimes mistakes cannot be corrected and then he has to start over with a new piece of wood. Sometimes the project is salvageable. For example, he recently cut into the leg of a cartoon character but saved it by installing a bracket on the back to stabilize it. Painting his plywood cutouts is a little less stressful. "When you make a mistake (while painting) you can paint over it," Kramer said. One of the characters he has reproduced is Woody Woodpecker. This is

fitting, for the Woody Woodpecker television series has a La Grande connection. The voices for some of the characters in the series were provided by the late actor Dallas McKennon, who grew up in La Grande. McKennon, best known for playing the role of a barkeep in the popular 1960s Daniel Boone television series, died in 2009 at age 89. The characters Kramer has reproduced in addition to those from the Woody Woodpecker, Dick Tracy and Popeye comic strips and shows include Li'l Abner, Blondie, Beetle Bailey, Mr. Magoo, the Pink Panther, Joe Palooka, Felix the Cat and more than 20 others. Kramer moved to La Grande about

five years ago years ago to be near his son, Ted Kramer, a former Observer editor and publisher, after a 36-year career in the Willamette Valley and the Columbia River Gorge as log scaler. The characters he makes are done only for enjoyment. Kramer said he could never sell them because of copyright restrictions. Nathan Larson, marketing director of Grande Ronde Retirement Residence, said Kramer's creations are a very popular feature. "Everyone loves his artwork. It is very inviting. It is inspiring for people to see. He is making (Grande Ronde Retirement Residence) a better place," Larson said. ■

Cost of Washington's measles outbreak tops \$1M

By Jake Goldstein-Street
Seattle Times

The cost of Washington's measles outbreak has surpassed \$1 million as more than 200 health-department staffers from the state and Clark County focus their efforts on the disease. As of Tuesday, there were 63 confirmed cases of measles in Clark County, 44 of which were in children under 10 years old, according to the county's Public Health department, which is also investigating one suspected case. There is also a single case reported in King County, bringing the statewide total to 64, according to the state Department of Health (DOH). DOH has spent approximately \$614,000 on staff and supplies as of Tuesday, in addition to about \$115,000 in other non-budgeted expenditures, according to state epidemiologist Dr. Scott Lindquist, who expects the total response to eventually cost the state "well over a million dollars." Meanwhile, Clark County Public Health has spent about \$500,000 responding to the measles outbreak, bringing the statewide total over \$1 million, says Dr. Alan Melnick, the county's public health director. "This is taxpayer money for something that could have been completely, utterly preventable in the first place," he told the Seattle Times. Out of approximately 1,900 total staffers, 166 state

Department of Health staff members, working approximately 8,700 hours, have been assigned to the measles outbreak so far, according to Lindquist. Some are communicable disease epidemiologists, normally focusing on issues such as hepatitis and day-to-day food-borne illness outbreaks — duties that have largely been put on the back burner. "It's going to slow down everything else," Lindquist said, noting that usual work is picked up by the remaining staff or is put aside. "The current public health infrastructure is really threatened by events like this." Each Department of Health staffer spends about two weeks at a time in Clark County, which means the state must pay for hotel rooms, their day-to-day costs and travel, according to Lindquist. Of about 110 full-time employees, Clark County Public Health has 40 to 50 staffers working on measles at any given time, according to Melnick. Epidemiological staff members, who were working on sexually transmitted diseases and other health concerns, are being forced to shift their focus onto measles, as are environmental-health staff members, some of whom do restaurant inspections. Melnick says restaurants are still safe for eating because those inspections will still get done, but they could be carried out slower.

Two additional Epidemic Intelligence Service officers, who conduct outbreak investigations and are assigned by the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), were set to go to Clark County again Wednesday. Volunteers from the Medical Reserve Corps have also lent their time to the ongoing efforts. The state Military Department's Emergency Operations Center, which coordinates resources in support of the DOH, brought in a five-person incident management team with medical specialties from North Dakota, which finished a 19-day stint in Washington on Monday, along with two disease investigators from Idaho, who were here from Feb. 2 to Sunday, according to Robert Ezelle, director of the department's Emergency Management Division. The team from North Dakota cost the state just over \$24,000, while the Idaho investigators cost a little more than \$8,000, according to Ezelle. As the outbreak slowed recently, Ezelle says there are no plans to bring more resources to Washington from other states. Measles has spread since the start of the year primarily through children who aren't

vaccinated, with 55 of the 63 confirmed cases in Clark County in patients who have not been immunized. Clark County, which includes Vancouver, has uncharacteristically high vaccine exemption rates for school-age children. While the nonmedical exemption rate for kindergarten enrollment in the 2017-2018 school year was approximately 2 percent nationwide, according to the CDC, Washington had an exemption rate on philosophical, personal or religious grounds of 4 percent. By comparison, Clark County, had a 6.7 percent exemption rate, according to state health-department data. In hopes of reducing the possibility of future outbreaks, lawmakers in Olympia have proposed two measures to tighten the personal or philosophical exemption used to excuse children from vaccines necessary for school entry. Legislation moving through the House would eliminate the objection for the measles, mumps and rubella vaccine, while a Senate bill, subject of a committee hearing Wednesday in Olympia, aims to get rid of the personal exemption for all vaccines needed to attend school or a licensed day-care center. ■

LEE

Continued from Page 1A on March 1 to see where Lee stands on getting official representation.

Lee was ordered to have no contact with specific members of Williams' family. Lee's arrest was based on an indictment issued by a Union County Grand Jury after an investigation by the Union County Major Crimes Team. The Major Crimes Team consists of members from the Union County Sheriff's Office, the La Grande Police Department, the Oregon State Police and the Union County District Attorney's Office.

In November, The Observer reported Loretta Williams called 911 to report a man in her backyard at approximately 1:40 a.m. on the 17th. The dispatchers heard her confront the man and then heard a loud noise. Deputies and troopers arrived within minutes and found Williams dead of one or more apparent gunshot wounds. In November, Union County Sheriff Boyd Rasmussen said when Williams she told them "she might know who it was." Rasmussen said he could not comment on what precipitated the homicide and noted that the investigation is ongoing. ■



Courtesy photo

The land purchase would secure the acres' future.

EAST MORAINE

Continued from Page 1A the plans.

The purchase of the land would unequivocally secure the future of the land, Ackley said. The campaign's website echoes Ackley's claim: "By acquiring the property, we will ensure that there is no future development, that traditional uses continue and that the East Moraine becomes a legal publically accessible asset to our community." Ackley is confident the fundraising will go

smoothly. "I don't think it's a hard sell," she said. To donate to the East Moraine Campaign and read more about the fundraising efforts, visit www.morainecampaign.org. ■

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