

Eastern advances to second round in NIA national tournament

It's that time of year again — remember to spring your clocks forward for daylight saving time Sunday, March 10!

Notable women of La Grande's history, 2A

THE OBSERVER

SERVING UNION AND WALLOWA COUNTIES SINCE 1896

FRIDAY-SUNDAY • March 8-10, 2019 • \$1.50

Weekend

Good day to our valued subscriber Sherri Shelman of La Grande

The name has changed, but the people are the same!

Lewis, Poe, Moeller, Gunderson & Roberts LLC is now
CPA connected professional ACCOUNTANTS LLC

We've changed our name for the final time! After nearly 70 years in business and numerous name changes, our commitment to outstanding professional service and community support remains the same.

For guidance on the new Tax Reform or other tax preparation questions, please come see us at
Connected Professional Accountants LLC.
1121 Adams Ave
La Grande, OR 97850

CONTACT US TODAY 541.963.4191

World's strongest grandma?

Debbie Brow is a powerlifting champion

By Francisca Benitez
The Observer

Debbie Brow is a 61-year-old powerlifter. She holds two state records and two weeks ago she broke a national record. But she's far from slowing down — in fact, she's really just getting started.

Brow began competing in powerlifting only two years ago, and she has ambitions to continue to national and even international competitions.

Brow is originally from Eugene but has lived in La Grande for 40 years and has run a day care business for 35. She explained she joined Mountain Valley Fitness when it opened in La Grande in 2012. At the time, she was going only because she felt the need to stay healthy. After about a year, she started working with personal trainer Derek Harmon and continued training with him for a couple years.

Harmon said Brow was not especially excited to come into the gym at the time.

"I was trying to find something she was passionate about and enjoyed and she was really good at, and I kind of stumbled upon the fact that she was really strong for her age," he said.

He recalled challenging Brow to flip over a 350-pound tire in the outdoor area of Mountain Valley Fitness.

"She goes out there and lifts up this big heavy tire. She struggles but she lifts it up and flips it and really surprised herself — surprised me a little bit too. I think that's when it really clicked for her that she was a lot stronger than she was giving herself credit for," he said.

Brow said Harmon's challenge motivated her to start lifting weights, and that was when she realized she truly loves lifting and getting stronger. Now she can't wait to go to the gym, and she even describes herself as being "addicted" to working out.

"I never would have thought two years ago that I would be

See **Brow** / Page 5A

Union County's Prominent Women



Courtesy photos

Because March is Women's History Month and today is International Women's Day, The Observer's newsroom thought it would be the perfect time to highlight some of Union County's strongest, smartest and toughest women.

By Amanda Weisbrod
The Observer

We wish we could cover all of the many inspiring and empowered women in this area — unfortunately, we had room for only five, so we



DONNA BEVERAGE
Union County Commissioner

Donna Beverage just started her third year as one of Union County's commissioners, and she said she's excited for the opportunity to continue serving her community.



DARCY DOLGE
Arts Center East Executive Director

As the executive director at Art Center East, an art gallery and creative space in La Grande, Darcy Dolge "wears a lot of different hats."

"I work with partnership heads, grant writing, fundraising, curat-



SANDY SORRELS
Owner and Operator Ten Depot Street

Back in 1982, Sandy Sorrells decided to open Mamacita's, the first Mexican restaurant in La Grande, and boy, was it a hit. Five years later she bought the Woodshed Steakhouse



CHARITY WALTER
President and CEO, Dainty Jewells

Like Sorrells, Charity Walter is a strong businesswoman in the area. Walter started her fashion boutique business for "modest women," Dainty Jewells, when she was only 16 years old in



ANJI WEISSENFLOH
Head Women's Basketball Coach and Athletic Director, EOU

As Eastern Oregon University's athletic director and head women's basketball coach, Anji Weissenfluh is a force to be reckoned with. Her long-time relationship with the Moun-

chose them based on prominence and tried to bring in a mix: Donna Beverage, Union County commissioner; Darcy Dolge, executive director at Art Center East in La Grande; Sandy Sorrells, owner of Ten Depot restaurant and bar in

"My favorite part of the job is doing what I can to help businesses succeed and expand in Union County — that's my passion," she said.

Beverage is also dedicated to the county's environmental concerns, such as forest management, natural resources conservation and wildfire prevention. She said her love of

ing exhibits," she said, listing off a few other roles including communications, team and organizational leadership and human resources planning. "Anything ACE is pretty much run by the four of us (board members)."

Dolge said she loves working in the arts because it makes her feel like she's made a meaningful

from a bankruptcy auction and turned it into Ten Depot Street, a bar and restaurant in La Grande serving a unique dinner menu every week with mostly organic food and regularly featuring live music.

"I was looking to start a restaurant and chose La Grande because there was nothing here," she said, laughing. "I love food and was al-

the bedroom of her parents' house in North Carolina. Over the next 10 years, the entrepreneur built a successful empire out of her passion for fashion and designing clothes.

Now, every year, Dainty Jewells ships more than 30,000 pieces of clothing worldwide, with Canada and Germany being the top international buyers. Walter got mar-

taineers began in 1989 when she enrolled as an undergraduate and reinstated the softball club. Then, in 1994, she came back to EOU in a full-time capacity to coach the softball team, and did so for 11 years.

For six of those years, Weissenfluh also coached the women's basketball team. Then she decided to put all of her focus on basketball.

La Grande; Charity Walter, president and CEO of Dainty Jewells fashion boutique in La Grande; and Anji Weissenfluh, athletic director and women's head basketball coach at Eastern Oregon University.

nature and the desire to protect it comes from her experience of being raised on a ranch in Union County, and now managing her own.

"I feel like it helps me understand how important water and our natural resources are, because we rely on them as ranchers," she said. "It also helps me understand

See **Beverage** / Page 5A

difference in the community.

"I'm honored to work in my field in a rural community and have its support," she said. "It's important our community has access to the arts or (the opportunity to) learn something new not offered in a college or high school class so we can be well-rounded,

See **Dolge** / Page 5A

ways interested in nutrition, and working in the restaurant business is almost like theater — you put on a show every night."

Sorrells sold Mamacita's 10 years ago because once other Mexican restaurants began rolling into town, the competition made things harder on business and it was difficult

See **Sorrells** / Page 5A

ried and moved to La Grande, her husband's hometown, in 2013 with one rack of clothing. Today, she has a 6,000-plus-square-foot warehouse that was specifically built for her business needs with funds from an urban renewal grant. The warehouse and storefront, decorated in a minimalistic femme style with

See **Walter** / Page 5A

She became EOU's athletic director six years ago, and 2019 is her 19th year as the women's coach.

"Eastern has been a big part of my life the past 30 years," she said. "You give up a lot of time as a coach and athletic director. Eastern is my family and has been for a long time."

EOU's women's basketball team
See **Weissenfluh** / Page 5A

URA discusses Call for Projects

LG City Council requests help with Grand Staircase

By Cherise Kaechele
The Observer

The Urban Renewal Agency had a split reaction to a new point system policy for its Call for Projects program during Wednesday night's meeting. Some URA members supported the clarity of the system, while others said it is now too stringent and no longer requires the agency members to even participate.

Agency Director Robert Strope presented the members with the updated policy that ranks the CFP applicants for the funding. The agency members have had multiple discussions regarding their concern about how the applications for funding were selected. Agency members have argued previously they aren't business majors and don't know how to judge a business on its viability through the information they receive. The result of those discussions was a new method for judging applications that awards points on whether the applicant provided a business plan and points for the proposed location. The system gives more points to projects in the Central Business

See **URA** / Page 5A

Established hemp farm wants to process in Union County

By Cherise Kaechele
The Observer

Rona Lindsey is hoping to help local hemp farmers save money by processing the crop here instead of sending it to the west side of the state.

Lindsey said this is her second year growing hemp in Union County. She recently applied for a conditional use permit to use a processing machine on her property. Hemp produces CBD oil, among other products.

"Right now, I have to send (the hemp) to Eugene," she said, noting the processors there take 50 to 60 percent of the revenue from the top.

By processing the plants herself, Lindsey — and other farmers in the region who wish to use the machinery — will be saving money.

"We could be fair to the farmers," she said.

See **Hemp** / Page 8A

INDEX

Comics.....4B Dear Abby.....8B Outdoors.....1B
Obituaries.....3A Spiritual.....6A
Crossword.....5B Opinion.....4A Sports.....7A

WEATHER Full forecast on the back of B section

Friday
22 Low
Rather cloudy

Saturday
37/16
Mostly cloudy

Sunday
37/17
Partly sunny

CONTACT US

541-963-3161

Issue 29
2 sections, 18 pages
La Grande, Oregon

Email story ideas to news@lagrandeobserver.com.
More contact info on Page 4A.

MONDAY DOLLS COMFORT DEMENTIA PATIENTS

Online at lagrandeobserver.com



8 51153 00100 6