

Wallowa Co. sweeps OOL awards

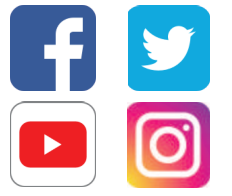


EOU freshman gives back with theater production, 2A



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Good day to our valued subscriber Delores Fincher of La Grande

Elgin City Council moves to purchase equipment from La Grande

By Amanda Weisbrod
The Observer

At its regular meeting Tuesday night, Elgin's city council moved to purchase a closed circuit television video inspection van from the City of La Grande's public works department to aid Elgin's current sewer renovation project.

Because the City of La Grande is looking to buy a new CCTV van for around \$300,000, it offered to sell its old van at a discounted price of \$10,000 to Elgin's public works department, which had been renting the van from La Grande regularly beforehand.

Elgin Mayor Allan Duffy said this purchase could potentially save the city tens of thousands of dollars as its public works department begins renovating the wastewater system in-house, especially because renting the truck from La Grande costs Elgin about \$2,300 each instance.

"We've spent well over \$10,000 on renting the van already," Duffy said during the meeting. "I don't think we should pass this up."

A CCTV inspection van is typically used to assess and evaluate problem areas within sewer systems that are experiencing issues such as inflow and infiltration of groundwater, which can overwhelm the sanitation process and even lead to overflow. Because the wastewater system beneath Elgin hasn't been fully updated since 1964, the city's

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A MAYOR'S LIFE REMEMBERED



Observer file photo

Dan Pokorney visits the council chambers at La Grande's city hall in January of 2015 days before his last term as mayor ended.

By Dick Mason
The Observer

On a September day in 2012, Dan Pokorney, then mayor of La Grande, put in a grueling day in order to deliver a message of hope — a typical day for this man dedicated to community service.

Pokorney arrived at La Grande High School's track just before 10 p.m. Sept. 29 to provide concluding remarks for the 15th annual Drug Free Relay. Pokorney's appearance capped an exhausting day, which started in Salem where he attended a meeting of the League of Oregon Cities before rushing back to La Grande for the relay. The 12-hour event, which had more than 100 participants on 17 teams, was conducted to promote and support drug- and alcohol-free lifestyles in Union County.

"This is not the end, only the beginning," Pokorney told the relay participants. "This community cares and is not going to stop working until it is drug free."

Pokorney's relay appearance was one of about 635 community events he attended from 2011 to

2015 while mayor.

This remarkable number is evidence of the dedication of a tireless public servant, one whose inspiring story tragically ended Monday. Pokorney, 65, passed away in La Grande after suffering a cardiac arrest.

"I went to all ribbon cuttings and attempted to visit every business in the city to let them know I was willing to listen to their concerns."

— Dan Pokorney, former mayor of La Grande

Pokorney had lived in La Grande since May of 1973, when he moved here from Nebraska with his wife, Linda. He made his mark on the La Grande community over the next 45 years, serving not only as mayor but also as a city councilor, a member of the La Grande School Board, a volunteer for Our Lady of the Valley Catholic Church where he was a member of its Knights

of Columbus chapter and much more. At Our Lady of the Valley, Pokorney's work included operating its booth at the Union County Fair for years and helping lead many church projects.

"He was volunteer par excellence," said Colleen MacLeod, a former Union County Commissioner.

MacLeod and her husband, Al, are the owners of Joe Beans, a coffee and sandwich shop in La Grande, where Pokorney was a regular each morning and made a habit of lending a hand.

"He would help us open each morning and shovel snow off the sidewalk in front of our shop and those next to ours," Colleen MacLeod said.

MacLeod believes that Pokorney's good deeds will not go unrewarded.

"There will be no waiting in line for him at the pearly gates. His ticket is already punched," she said.

Di Lyn Larsen-Hill, who served as mayor of La Grande about 20 years ago, said it was clear that Pokorney was comfortable in his role as mayor.

"He loved being mayor. He liked the ceremony of being mayor," she said.

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IC council elects president

Observer staff

Island City's city council has a new president.

Stan Terry was elected council president at Monday night's city council meeting. Terry is beginning his fifth year on the council. He was first elected to the council in 2014 and was re-elected to Position 1 in November 2018 after running unopposed.

Terry, who grew up in Lostine, served as a state trooper from 1984 to 2003. He has resided in Island City since 1989. He is succeeding Robb Rea as council president. Rea stepped down after being elected mayor in November.

The council president's responsibilities include serving in the role of mayor when the mayor is not able to attend a meeting.

Monday's meeting was the first regular monthly meeting for Clint Williams, the council's newest member. Williams was sworn in to fill the council's open Position 2 seat on Feb. 25 at a special meeting. He was named to the council at its Feb. 11 meeting. Position 2 was Rea's council seat.

Williams is a district sales manager for Northwood Manufacturing in Union County. He is no stranger to community service, for he is also a volunteer for the Elgin Stampede rodeo and a member of the La Grande School District's budget committee. He is eligible to serve on the budget committee because Island City is in the La Grande School District. ■



Francisca Benitez/The Observer

Chip VanGunten and Stephan Wing, right, stand outside the Grande Ronde Hospital emergency room.

More than just security

Security guards at Grande Ronde Hospital have a unique job

By Francisca Benitez
The Observer

What do you imagine when you picture a security guard? You might think of an intimidating person standing quietly, ready to jump into action

if anyone steps out of line or breaks rules. The job is a little different at Grande Ronde Hospital, where the most important tool is compassion.

GRH brought in security guards to protect nurs-

es and patients around two and a half years ago as part of a pilot program aimed at keeping hospital staff safe. Elaine La-Rochelle, GRH facilities director, said the security

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Conference aims to help girls achieve their goals

The first annual 'Dream It Be It' gathering will provide vital career advice

By Francisca Benitez
The Observer

There will be a one-day conference for girls age 14 to 18 aimed at giving them tools for achieving career goals on March 16 hosted by Soroptimist of La Grande.

Soroptimist organizations all over the world have held "Dream It Be It: Career Support for Girls" conferences. This is the first time the La Grande Soroptimist branch will be hosting the event, but Fam Moulton, who is a board member of the La Grande Soroptimist and chair of this project, said the con-

ference will be held every year from now on.

The conference will focus on helping girls discover their dreams, set goals, overcome obstacles and put their dreams into action. There will be speakers from many women in the community, from professionals in the medical field to a massage therapist.

The girls attending will receive help with resumes and cover letters and practice possible interview questions. They will be given a gift bag with tools to help them succeed. The

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Tonight 17 LOW
Mainly clear

Thursday 45/26
Clouds and sun

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