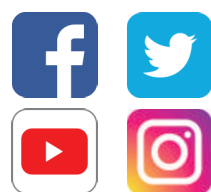




THE OBSERVER

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Good day to our valued subscriber Stanley Ludviksen of La Grande

Ralph's Place

■ Union County Search and Rescue begins construction of new building

By Trish Yerges
For The Observer

The Union County Search and Rescue non-profit organization will begin pouring concrete fillings for its new building, christened "Ralph's Place," on March 30, at 63836 Highway 203 east of La Grande.

The SAR organization, which is under the Union County Sheriff's Department, has about 40 volunteers. The board members include: Chris Ritter, captain; Monita Woollard, secretary; Khris Wilson, treasurer; Nick Vora, training officer; and members Rob Robbins and Dan Woollard.

"The building has been in the planning and fundraising stages for six or seven

years," said SAR member and project manager Fred Hawkins. "There is no tax money being used for this project."

The building will be erected on a 1.3-acre triangular parcel of land belonging to the City of La Grande as part of its sewage treatment plant. It wasn't being used and was full of brush, so the SAR organization negotiated with the city to use it for its building.

As a nonprofit, the SAR organization has its own bank account with about \$50,000 dedicated to the building project. It is also accepting community cash donations and in-kind donations, which can be sent to Union County Search and Rescue, 1109 K Ave., La Grande.



Union County Search and Rescue Courtesy photo

New Search and Rescue members went through training over the weekend of March 16 and 18.

Among the project's contributors to date are James Hasse of Cornerstone Home Builders, a 12-year SAR member, who will be

the general contractor for the construction project; Jeff Hsu of Baggett-Griffith & Blackman surveyors, a new SAR member, who did

the engineer drawings for the permits; and Les Tipton of Associated Design & Engineering, who certified
See SAR / Page 5A

Legislation may ease housing shortage

By Cherise Kaechle
The Observer

Newly proposed legislation may have some positive impacts in Union County if it passes. A recent proposal from Speaker of the House Tina Kotek could ease the housing crisis in Union County — and across the state.

The bill would end single-family zoning, according to an Associated Press article. Cities with more than 10,000 people would be required to offer, in addition to single family homes, what's known as "middle" housing options. That means building more residential structures with multiple dwelling units, like duplexes and triplexes.

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EOU plans to expand online enrollment

By Francisca Benitez
The Observer

Eastern Oregon University is in the process of negotiating contracts with The Learning House, a company that assists colleges and universities in expanding its online programs.

If the partnership goes through, The Learning House will help market EOU's online program to more students, but students

already enrolled won't notice a difference. Tim Seydel, EOU's vice president for university advancement, said the curriculum and faculty will not change. The Learning House will take a percentage of profits from online enrollment in exchange for its marketing services.

Distance education has been a part of EOU's history for decades. Now, about half of the students

enrolled at EOU are taking at least one of their classes online.

Dixie Lund is a Board of Trustees member at EOU, and former dean of distance education. She said about 40 years ago, EOU started looking into distance learning because it was the only college in Eastern Oregon and therefore needed to find a way to provide education for people in the area who couldn't physically

make the commute.

"We were able to establish part-time locations at different regional centers, and over time those have grown," she said.

EOU now has 11 regional centers across Oregon. Students enrolled in online programs can visit their nearest regional center to meet with advisers in person, and certain locations offer in-person

See EOU / Page 6A

Bill calls on state to support FFA

■ Backers make sure FFA bill is not forgotten

By Dick Mason
The Observer

A bill that would remove barriers for students seeking to join FFA chapters and might reduce burnout among Oregon high school agricultural science teachers may be gaining momentum in the state Legislature.

The legislation, House Bill 2444, has passed out of the House Education Committee and is now in the Joint Student Success Committee.

Imler High School's agricultural sciences teacher and FFA chapter adviser, J.D. Cant, believes the bill, which would cost the state \$1.2 million in the 2019-21 biennium, has a realistic chance of passing as long as its supporters keep it on the radar of legislators.

"We do not want it to be forgotten," Cant said.

The IHS teacher explained that his biggest fear is that HB 2444 will languish in the Joint Student Success Committee and not be voted on before the current legislative session ends. That is why Cant is helping lead a statewide effort to keep legislators aware of the bill.

"We want to have a consistent drumbeat," Cant said.

FFA students from throughout the state are speaking to the Joint Ways and Means Committee at every opportunity about HB 2444. The committee is the Legislature's appropriations committee, which determines state budget policy.

FFA students Chloe Birkmaier and Kylie Barry, both seniors, addressed the
See FFA / Page 5A

CHD wraps families in care

By Amanda Weisbrod
The Observer

Center for Human Development's Wraparound program gives new life and opportunity to Union County families in crisis through its individualized care services.

CHD runs its Wraparound program based on Portland University's National Wraparound Initiative, an organization dedicated to providing comprehensive care to "youth, regardless of the complexity of their needs" by making sure children are "connected to caring adults and have access to appropriate services and supports so they can be healthy, experience positive development, and live and thrive in their homes and communities," according to its mission statement.

This wraparound care can range from mental health counseling for the child to connecting family members to community services like USDA's Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program or job placement assistance.

According to CHD Clinical Supervisor Candace Walters, the specifics of the provided care depend on each case, but the overarching goal of Wrap is to help families thrive in the Union County community.

Wrap challenged us to find our inner strengths."
— Amber Mason, mother and CHD Wrap participant

"We look for what each individual Wrap client wants and needs," she said. "Our mission and vision is to develop a unique and cohesive plan for each family."

Walters said CHD's Wraparound program currently services eight families but has the resources to help up to 15 at a time. Any community member or relative who knows of a family that could benefit from Wrap is encouraged to refer them to the program. Families in crisis can even refer themselves by visiting or contacting representatives of CHD.

Olivia Westenskow, former Wrap partner and current youth coordinator at CHD, said by meeting families "where they are at" rather than "imposing beliefs" on where they should be, care providers are better able to understand the needs of a family on a personal basis.

"As a Wrap partner, you get really great interactions with families and you can see what their needs are," she said. "You get to build rapport and even friendships with families, and when you know them on a personal level, you can help them advocate for themselves better."

Amber Mason, who graduated from CHD's Wraparound program Thursday after a year of involvement, said when she and her family randomly picked La Grande on a map and moved here in 2016, she was lost.

"We came here from a toxic situation," Mason said. "We went from eating disorders and me not being able to walk into Walmart alone to me going shopping by myself and my daughter eating healthy. We've had a whole new life over the last year."

Mason said her 14-year-old daughter, Jaden, who has been receiving mental health services since she was 5 years old, has especially blossomed because of
See Wrap / Page 5A

10 WRAP PRINCIPLES

Amanda Weisbrod/The Observer
Info from nwi.pdx.edu

- FAMILY CHOICE AND VOICE**
Planning is grounded in family members' perspectives.
- TEAM BASED**
The wraparound team is agreed upon by and committed to the family.
- NATURAL SUPPORTS**
The plan reflects interventions that draw on sources of natural support.
- COLLABORATION**
Team members work together to develop a single wraparound plan.
- COMMUNITY BASED**
The team implements support strategies in the most inclusive settings possible.
- CULTURALLY COMPETENT**
The wraparound process respects and builds on the preferences of the family.
- INDIVIDUALIZED**
To achieve the goals, the team develops customized sets of supports and services.
- STRENGTHS BASED**
Wraparound identifies and builds on the assets of the family and its community.
- UNCONDITIONAL**
A wraparound team does not give up on or reject children and their families.
- OUTCOME BASED**
The team monitors progress of planned goals, and revises strategies accordingly.

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WEATHER

Full forecast on the back of B section



Tonight
31 Low
Partly cloudy



Thursday
60/35
Mostly sunny

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