

LADD

Continued from Page 1A
will eliminate a chronic freezing problem,” said Remily, a project engineer for ODOT.

He explained bridges usually freeze first in cold conditions because they are sandwiched between cold air. The adjacent roadway by contrast freezes later since only its top surface is exposed to frigid air and its bottom is insulated by soil.

Remily said the culvert to be added will not get icy as quickly because it will have ground insulation.

Replacing the bridge with a culvert will also be beneficial because it will eliminate a cross slope on the freeway, reducing vehicle slide-offs during the winter.

To accommodate demolition of the bridge and construction of the culvert box, the Ladd Creek westbound on-ramp will be closed from 7 a.m. to noon and 1 p.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Friday, until the end of October. This means people in the Ladd Creek area, including those who have cabins, will not be able to get on to I-84 during these daytime closures. Exceptions will be made for emergencies, Remily said.

Additional I-84 work planned for this year includes widening the slow lane shoulder over a 10-mile stretch from milepost 260 to 270, which runs approximately from La Grande to Ladd Canyon.

“This will improve safety for construction and maintenance crews performing future work on that stretch of



Dick Mason/The Observer

This sign in Ladd Canyon warns drivers to be aware of trucks coming on and off Interstate 84 during the Ladd Canyon Freight Improvement Project.

the freeway and help better accommodate wide loads,” Remily said.

Repaving the interchange ramps at Exit 265 near the west entrance into Ladd Canyon is also set for this year as part of the ODOT project.

“This work will take place at night,” said Remily, noting the date has not yet been set for the start of the repaving work.

ODOT will resume its Ladd Canyon work in 2020 on April 8. The work done will include the addition of a 1.5-mile eastbound third lane on I-84 from milepost 269.5 to milepost 271. The expanded space should reduce the number of times Ladd Canyon has to be closed due to trucks blocking lanes.

Remily explained if a truck crash-

es in the future three-lane roadway, traffic will be able to move around it while it is being cleared.

Trucks drivers will be allowed to use only the inner and the middle lanes while automobile drivers will be permitted to drive in all three. Remily said the three-lane stretch will be similar to an eastbound one on I-84 just east of Pendleton.

Additional work scheduled for 2020 includes the widening of the fast lane shoulders running from La Grande to Ladd Canyon. The fast lane will be closed when this work is being done.

The entire project is expected to be completed by October of 2020, Remily said. ■

HEALTH

Continued from Page 1A
the InterMountain Education Service District, which serves all school districts in Union County and several in Baker, Umatilla and Morrow counties, according to Mark Mulvihill, superintendent of IMESD.

Each of the six school districts in Union County currently have at least one mental health counselor, but that has not always been the case, and a closer look at the details reveals holes in mental health care coverage in the county’s schools.

Cove School District lacked a full-time counselor from the beginning of this school year until March when it was able to fill the position. Union School District’s counselor splits her time between the CHD school-based health centers in Union School District and La Grande High School, although Union Superintendent Carter Wells said CHD is currently looking for a full-time counselor for his district. For this reason, CHD’s school-based health centers offer mental health services only two days a week — Mondays and Wednesdays for Union, Tuesdays and Thursdays for La Grande.

Elgin School District will have a full-time counselor at its high school beginning May 1 after the position had been vacant since November 2018. The district recently hired a part-time mental health counselor at its elementary school, and Elgin Superintendent Diane Greif hopes the district can receive additional funding to eventually turn the part-time position into a full-time one.

“The high school counselor position was a big hole we needed to get filled, and we hadn’t had a counselor at the grade school for years,” Greif said. “We have a lot of kids who live in crisis — we have to be aware and mediate that.”

The superintendent also pointed to the fact that not having a qualified professional to properly care for

students’ mental health needs pushes the onus onto unqualified teachers and faculty members.

“We’re not trained to be as effective with helping kids with mental health (as a counselor),” Greif said. “(Mental health care in schools) is becoming more of a necessity with changes in our culture and society.”

The issue of why the need for mental health services in schools has increased arose in a conversation The Observer had with Mulvihill, who said he has seen the percentage of students with mental health issues in rural Oregon rise over the 30 years he has worked in education.

“I think it’s the impact of poverty,” he said. “We’re seeing more poverty in rural communities, significantly more than what it used to be. The impacts of poverty on struggling families means stress in the home, inconsistency and trauma, which leads to kids dealing with it they best they can, but that sometimes (leads to) behaviors that aren’t appropriate.”

While the financial health of metropolitan zones in Oregon have rebounded from the Great Recession, which lasted from late 2007 to mid-2012, rural areas have not fared as well. A report published in 2016 by Save The Children, an organization dedicated to supporting “the most isolated and underserved children in rural America,” ranks Oregon as 24th in the nation for its rural child poverty rate of 21.6 percent. In comparison, the state’s urban child poverty rate that year was only 16 percent.

As CHD’s mental health director, Grigg has seen firsthand how the hardships of poverty — especially the issue of affordable housing — can negatively affect the mental health of children and their

families, and CHD is doing what it can to offer support to the community.

“It’s interesting how much housing issues in this area can impact mental health. At least in La Grande, finding housing is a real challenge,” he said. “Even though we’ve seen an uptick in behavioral health needs, we’ve been investing a lot more into community based services to help support people. School is one of the most poignant ways we’re doing that.”

Grigg said one of the largest obstacles to hurdle with providing mental health care in Union County schools isn’t a lack of funds, but a lack of qualified professionals willing to relocate to the area.

“I think especially in rural communities, being able to attract qualified mental health professionals is a real struggle,” he said. “We do have some benefits such as financial incentives, but we also try to find people with some connection to the area so there is more of a chance of them sticking around here.”

Rust, who works closely with community mental health programs through her position as a school-based health coordinator at GOBHI, said she “highly agrees” with Grigg.

“It’s very difficult in rural Eastern Oregon areas to get qualified mental health professionals,” she said. “There’s a very high turnover rate, which can make it tough at the mental health level when working in schools because youth (need) consistency.”

Grigg said he hopes to see more state and federal legislation pass in the near future to help strengthen mental health and community resources, especially in rural areas like Union County. Grigg said in mid-March, he personally testified for

POP 402, a 2019 policy goal pushed by Oregon Health Authority to “expand mental health access in schools” and “invest in suicide intervention and prevention,” according to the agency’s 2019 budget presentation.

In Gov. Kate Brown’s November 2018 budget proposal for the following two years, she suggested \$1.9 billion to be allocated for education. This isn’t enough for the 14 legislators of the Joint Committee on Student Success, however, as they hope to outline a separate funding plan for student wellness and wraparound services, according to policy recommendations made in early November 2018.

On the federal level, the Mental Health in Schools Act (HR 2319) would assist local communities and schools with mental health services by revising grant eligibility requirements and providing for comprehensive school mental health programs. However, this bill has not made any progress in the legislature since June 2017 when it was referred to the Subcommittee on Health.

Although it is unclear what the next phases of mental health care legislation look like, Mulvihill said the lack of mental health resources in schools — and subsequent student behavioral problems — has been the dominant topic of discussion at IMESD for the past two years, and if nothing changes, it will continue to be its focus.

“Even more than an issue, it’s a crisis. We’re seeing more kids with serious mental health issues and it’s demonstrated a lot in their behavior,” he said. “The school has more and more become the family unit for the kids.” ■

Contact Amanda Weisbrod at 541-963-3161 or email aweisbrod@lagrandeobserver.com.

HORSES

Continued from Page 1A

Weishaar offers several classes at her facility, including a weekly “Ladies Night.” It is a drop-in style class for women only. Weishaar said the reason a class for only women exists is to empower the attendees.

“Women tend to be a lot more confident and comfortable around other women,” she said.

She added that Ladies Night tends to be a fun time for women to chat and talk about their lives while working with their horses. “It’s their time to just relax, and honestly, it’s almost more of a therapy session than anything else,” she said.

Weishaar is from Union County. She graduated from high school in Imbler and attended Eastern Oregon University before transferring to Oregon State University. Horses have always been an important part of her life.

“I started riding before I was even born,” she

said. She started showing horses when she was 8 and began teaching horsemanship when she was a teenager.

In college, she said, she was considering teaching again for extra money, “but I was scared. I was afraid to fail.”

But friend encouraged her to give it a shot, so she did. That was when she officially started her own business. She said her bachelor’s degree in agricultural science with minors in animal science and business are useful to her every day now that she teaches horsemanship full-time at her Victory Acres facility.

Weishaar also teaches six horsemanship classes through EOU. She offers a beginner level and an advanced level. The EOU classes are taught at Victory Acres, 62611 Fruitdale Lane, near Riverside Park. ■

Contact Francisca Benitez at 541-963-3161 or email fbenitez@lagrandeobserver.com.

Your Family Deserves The **BEST** Technology... Value... TV!...

\$69.99 MONTH for 24 months

190 Channels America's Top 120

CALL TODAY Save 20%!
Offer ends 7/10/19.

1-866-373-9175

Add High Speed Internet **\$14.95** /mo.

Subject to availability. Restrictions apply. Internet provided by DSL and will be billed separately.

dish

Frontier AUTHORIZED SALES AGENT

Serious speed! Bundle and save today. Simply broadband. No Wi-Fi.

Save with Frontier Internet Bundles. Pay one price for two great services: high-speed internet and a full-featured home phone.

19.99 /month
6 Mbps • Free Wi-Fi Router • 1 Year Price Lock

67.97 /month
30 Mbps • Free Wi-Fi Router • 1 Year Price Lock

Call today and pay less **855-972-6641**

Frontier You can't get BS from a buffalo.

Union County will begin our roadside spray program to control vegetation and noxious weeds that are encroaching on road shoulders and right of ways. In most locations, spraying will extend four to eight feet from pavement edges. Property owners who do not want herbicides applied near their property must sign an “Owner Will Maintain” agreement with the county which must be updated annually. The county will provide signs for the owners participating. Property owners wishing to participate can sign up for the “Owner Will Maintain” program at the Union County Public Works Department located at 10513 N. McAlister Road in Island City. Any questions, please call 541-963-1016.

Grande Ronde Hospital Home Care Services

Home Health & Hospice

Our philosophy?

It's about how you LIVE.

- Certified Hospice & Palliative Care RNs
- Caregiver teaching and support
- Pain and Symptom management
- Spiritual Care Coordinator
- Palliative, Transitional & Respite Care
- Hospice Volunteers
- Skilled Nursing services
- Bereavement Services
- PT, OT & Speech Therapies
- Joint Commission accredited
- Licensed Clinical Social Workers
- Medicare/Medicaid certified
- CNA's for personal care

Consistent Award-Winning Agency. The ONLY not-for profit in the area.

To learn more about GRH Home Care Services, call us at 541-963-CARE (2273)

HomeCare Elite TOP 2012 AGENCY

TOP 500 2014 AGENCY

SHRIMPST HONORARY SATISFACTION AWARD

TOP 200 HOSPICE AGENCIES

2017 TOP 100 AGENCY

La GRANDE AUTO REPAIR

975-2000

www.lagrandeautorepair.com

MOST ADVANCED TECHNOLOGY AVAILABLE

ACDelcoTSS

Joe Horst

YOU HAVE A CHOICE.

Did you know you don't have to use the physical therapy your doctor recommends? It is **your** choice. And Mountain Valley Therapy accepts **all** referrals, so even if your doctor refers you to someone else, we can still get you in the **same week you call**. Absolutely **no** wait lists.

This is just a little thing we like to call; **exercising your right to choose.**

@mvtherapy (541) 962 0830

MOUNTAIN VALLEY THERAPY