

SPORTS

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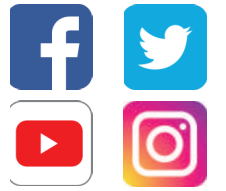
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THE OBSERVER

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Veterans saluted at Wyden town hall

Issues addressed included health care, voting and infrastructure

By Dick Mason
The Observer

U.S. Sen. Ron Wyden (D-Portland) was not greeted by groups or individuals protesting his stances on issues during a town hall at the Union County Senior Center Saturday evening.

Still, the town hall, the 935th Wyden has conducted since being elected in 1996, will not soon be forgotten by the senator, who announced it was being conducted in honor of the veterans of Union County.

"This is the first time I have ever dedicated a town hall (to a group or individual)," the senator said.

Wyden took this step after saluting retiring Union County Veterans Service Director Byron Whipple

by presenting him with an American flag that has flown at the U.S. capital in Washington, D.C. Whipple is completing his 10th and final year in the position.

"He has just been incredible," Wyden said. "Byron is a lifeline for the veterans of Union County. He is always there for them."

Wyden, while speaking about veterans, mentioned his late father, who was Jewish and grew up in Germany. He fled to the United States with his family in the 1930s to escape the impending Holocaust.

Wyden recalled his father, who became an American citizen, eagerly enlisted in the U.S. Army during World War II. He wanted to help the Allies defeat the Nazis, and he



Dick Mason/The Observer

U.S. Sen. Ron Wyden reads a tribute to retiring Union County Veterans Service Director Byron Whipple, left, Saturday.

did so by writing propaganda leaflets that were dropped over Germany during WWII.

Following his presentation to Whipple, the senator began fielding questions from the audience, a number of which concerned the rising cost of pharmaceuticals.

Wyden said this is one of the most important issues facing the United States.

"My number one priority is helping (bring) down the price of drugs," Wyden said. "We need to stop the price gouging by pharmaceutical companies."

He said there are problems up and down the prescription drug supply chain, including insurance companies, which need to be addressed. He said steps such as getting rid of the middleman need to be taken to help

See **Wyden** / Page 5A

LG City Council officially voices opposition to B2H

By Dick Mason
The Observer

The City of La Grande is weighing in on the Boardman to Hemingway debate.

The La Grande City Council has issued a proclamation declaring its opposition to the proposed 300-mile Boardman to Hemingway 500-kilovolt transmission power line, which would pass through Union County and the La Grande area.

"I am very pleased that the city council is advocating for the citizens," said Peter Barry, a member of the Stop B2H Coalition and resident of La Grande. "(The proclamation) makes the citizens feel like they are being listened to by their representatives."

Idaho Power is leading the effort to get the B2H line built with help from partners PacifiCorp and the Bonneville Power Administration. It will cost about \$1 billion. Idaho Power is considering two routes through La Grande, both in the Morgan Lake area. The Mill Creek route

See **B2H** / Page 5A

Union County Chamber awards banquet honors community members

By Francisca Benitez
The Observer

La Grande's Blue Mountain Conference Center was transformed into "A Night in Monte Carlo" Friday for the 2019 Union County Chamber Awards banquet. Former Chamber President Karrine Brogoitti, who is also the regional publisher at The Observer, and Ashley O'Toole, chamber board member, hosted the casino-themed evening, which was filled with jokes, tears and heartfelt speeches from both the presenters and recipients of awards.

The title of "man of the year" was awarded posthumously to Daniel Pokorney, former mayor of La Grande.

"The Man of the Year Award is given to men who show commitment above and beyond for the good and welfare of our commu-

nity. Often times we don't recognize the real benefit of someone's life and what they have given until they are gone. Dan Pokorney is one of those men," O'Toole said. "He had a strong sense that part of his stewardship to God was sharing his leadership abilities in our community."

Pokorney's children, Jason Pokorney and DaLyn Anderson, accepted the award on their father's behalf.

"Our dad, Dan, was very passionate about serving, especially in this community," Jason Pokorney said. "Moving from Nebraska to this little town out in the middle of Oregon, they had no idea what was to come of it. He spent the rest of his life here because he truly loved La Grande and this valley. I know that he is proud of this award right



Francisca Benitez/The Observer

Jason Pokorney and DaLyn Anderson accept the Man of the Year Award on behalf of their father, former La Grande Mayor Dan Pokorney, at Friday night's banquet.

now, and I would like to say thank you."

The Woman of the Year award was given to Mary Ann Miesner.

"Mary Ann, who currently serves on the La Grande City Council, has served for many other organizations in the past. Her service to the community includes serving on Central School's PTA,

La Grande School District's budget committee and the school board, the Urban Renewal Advisory committee, the La Grande planning commission, the Union County Mediation Center, running the La Grande Little League program and helping found the La Grande Main Street Downtown organization," Brogoitti said. "As if all

that were not enough, Mary Ann has taken on the monumental challenge of organizing the sixth annual Eastern Oregon Beer Festival.

"Believe it or not, this is just what fills Mary Ann's spare time."

Miesner thanked the chamber and her husband. "This town is the easiest

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Oregon Rural Action to host film screening

By Francisca Benitez
The Observer

The Oregon Rural Action Health Care Reform Action Team will host a screening of the documentary "Big Money Agenda: Democracy on the Brink" beginning at 6:30 p.m. April 18 at Cook Memorial Library. The event is open to the public, and there will be a panel of speakers after the screening.

Panelists will include Kristin Ostrom, president of the local ORA Blue Mountain Chapter, as well as La Grande Mayor Steve Clements, La Grande City Councilor Jim Whitbeck and

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This year's Arts for All event switches hands

By Trish Yerges
For The Observer

The La Grande Department of Parks & Recreation is hosting the annual Arts for All event from 9 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. April 27 at the Riveria School activity center. Kids of all ages and their parents are welcome to enjoy a fun-filled day, creating art in 20 different mediums.

"This is the first year I have been involved with Arts for All since it is now coming back to the Parks & Rec department from Art Center East,"

said McKayla Nitz, city recreation supervisor. "Last year it was at the armory, but we're moving it back to Riveria this year."

Arts for All is an opportunity for children of every demographic to experience art in a first-hand sense, she said. It's free to the public, and children of all ages are welcome.

"(The event strives) to make it so there are as few barriers as possible so these children get to experience art," Nitz said. "Special education children

and those with auditory needs are also welcome to participate."

Instead of a separate event for children with special needs, Arts for All is doing something a little different this year, following a similar inclusion model to what schools are moving toward.

"So if your child has auditory needs where they can't be around loud noises or lots of stimuli, we're reserving the last half hour of the event just for those kids specifically," Nitz said. "We will be ush-

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WEATHER Full forecast on the back of B section

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