

SPORTS

# Lillard, Blazers eliminate OKC



## New e-commerce site promotes Wallowa County gift basket business, 1B

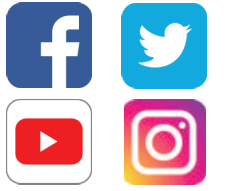


## Rotary Youth Exchange

Info Session  
Mon., April 29, 2019  
6:30 p.m. - 8:00 p.m. • La Grande High Library  
**Send a Student! / Host a Student!!**  
Get your questions answered!  
YouthExchange5100.org  
Questions? Call Michelle Long (541) 910-5137

# THE OBSERVER

SERVING UNION AND WALLOWA COUNTIES SINCE 1896



Follow us on the web

WEDNESDAY • April 24, 2019 • \$1.50

Good day to our valued subscriber Wythel Aldrich Gipson of Union

## LG work session focuses on tourism, BMCC

By Amanda Weisbrod  
The Observer

At Monday evening's work session, La Grande City Council members met with Union County Chamber of Commerce Executive Director Suzannah Moore-Hemann to review the chamber's annual reports and budget proposals for both tourism and the Blue Mountain Conference Center.

Moore-Hemann said in order to boost tourism, the chamber and the Union County Tourism Promotion

See **Chamber** / Page 5A

## Union committee to study ranger station options

By Dick Mason  
The Observer

The Union City Council is taking steps to determine the future of the seven buildings at the town's old U.S. Forest Service Ranger Station.

The city council agreed at a work session Monday to form a committee that will evaluate options for the ranger station and then make a recommendation on which course to pursue.

The ranger station, near the northwest edge of Union, was built in 1937 and deeded to the City of Union in 1993. The complex's buildings include a four-bedroom house, a three-bedroom house, a two-bedroom house, an old oil storage building and two detached garages.

The city rents the houses and two of the other buildings are used by the city's public works department.

See **Station** / Page 5A

## Banking services return to Union

Old West Federal Credit Union branch held soft opening Monday

By Dick Mason  
The Observer

The grand opening of the Old West Federal Credit Union branch in Union is a month away, but residents in need of banking services already have reason to celebrate.

A new branch opened for business Monday at 539 S. Main St. The credit union is being welcomed enthusiastically by the community, which has not had a banking institution since 2016 when Umpqua Bank closed its Union branch.

"It is exciting, absolutely," said Jocelyn Jones of Union.

The opening of the branch means residents will no longer have to leave town to do their banking.

"This will be way more convenient," Jones said. Michele Later of Union expressed a similar sentiment.

"Now if I need cash, I don't have to go to La Grande," she said. "All I have to do is walk down the street."

LaVon Hall noted the credit union will be particularly helpful for seniors. The Union resident explained many seniors do not like banking online, something many Union residents have likely done more often since Umpqua Bank closed.

"A lot of the elderly don't bank with computers," Hall said.

She added many seniors also do not like driving over icy roads in the winter to La Grande to bank.



Dick Mason/The Observer

A branch of Old West Federal Credit Union opened Monday in Union, giving residents a more convenient location for banking.

The new branch of Old West Federal Credit Union is in the old Community Bank building. The interior of the bank has a distinctly Union and Grande Ronde Valley flavor with at least a dozen

large black-and-white prints of local photos decorating its walls. Many of the photos, which include those of ranchers at work and World War I veterans, were provided by the Union County

Museum, said Branch Manager Cheryl Hargrove. The images were converted into prints by the Mitres Touch Gallery in La Grande.

The photos are meant to See **Bank** / Page 5A



Courtesy photo

La Grande's Urban Forestry Division holds two tree planting events each year, one in the spring and one in the fall, in order to meet a guideline set by the Tree City USA program. Pictured here is a group from the Spring 2018 event placing a tree in the right-of-way area in front of a home.

## Street tree planting brings fresh air to urban areas

By Amanda Weisbrod  
The Observer

As Monday was Earth Day and Friday is Arbor Day, it's only fitting that this week would be filled with tree-planting events in Union County.

In La Grande, the Urban Forestry Division of La Grande's Parks & Recreation Department is selling trees for \$30 to citizens who want to put a tree in the city's right-of-way area near their home. These tree planting events happen twice a year, once in the spring and once in the fall, to meet a requirement for Tree City USA, a program recognizing cities for "their excellence in urban forest management," according to its website.

Teresa Gustafson, a tree care educator within the Urban Forestry Division, said as of Monday, she still has 25 trees for sale out of the 65 she has set aside for the tree planting event, which will take place on Saturday.

"The goal for (La Grande's) urban forestry is to plant 100 trees a year," said Gustafson, adding that any remaining trees may be purchased after Saturday, and residents may add their names to the list for her fall order. "We try to target neighborhoods that maybe have lower canopy cover because the goals for the

street tree planting program are to increase the diversity of the trees that we have to make the forest more resilient and to increase overall canopy cover."

Planting trees is important to a community for a number of reasons, according to Gustafson. First, they offer shade in urban areas that feature mostly concrete. Trees also raise property values, motivate people to spend time outside and, most important, produce fresh air to breathe.

"There are a whole host of benefits people don't think about," she said. "Trees make an area more attractive, and people need nature. It's good for us."

La Grande's Urban Forestry is also hosting a field day from noon to 2 p.m. Friday at Pioneer Park, where fourth- and fifth-grade students can visit seven different stations to learn about proper tree care and planting techniques.

"One of our stations is the wildlife biologist from Wallowa-Whitman National Forest. She's going to do a station on native pollinators," Gustafson said. "We'll also have a tree walk with tree ID, and we'll have a station where kids are going to learn more about the benefits of trees in an urban forest."

Also in La Grande, Eastern Oregon See **Trees** / Page 5A

## EOU program helps disadvantaged students succeed

By Francisca Benitez  
The Observer

Student Support Services is a program that has been at EOU since 2016. Part of TRIO, a federal program, it helps students who face barriers in college make the most out of their time and feel supported.

TRIO originally had three programs, hence the name. The programs were Upward Bound, Talent Search and SSS. The federal

program has expanded since its inception in 1968 and now has eight programs, but the name TRIO stuck.

The EOU TRIO program is Student Support Services, or SSS. The program is for students who are first-generation college students, are disabled, are lower-income or are disadvantaged in some other way.

SSS offers many services such as seminars that teach about top-

ics like applying for scholarships or financial aid and how to stay mentally and physically healthy. Other services include tutoring, equipment rentals like calculators and laptops, and even printing services. Students also get academic advising and help planning what to do after college.

There is a room on the EOU campus where students in SSS can come and study, speak to an SSS adviser, chat or just relax.

This provides an opportunity for students to meet and support one another.

The SSS advisers are there to guide students in whatever way they need, even if what they need is just someone to talk to.

Michael Williams, EOU TRIO/SSS advisor, brought the SSS program to EOU in 2016. He has a special connection to the program, as he used it himself when

See **EOU** / Page 2A

### INDEX

Business.....1B Dear Abby.....8B Record.....2A  
Classified.....4B Lottery.....2A Sports.....6A  
Comics.....3B Obituaries.....3A  
Crossword.....5B Opinion.....4A

### WEATHER

Full forecast on the back of B section

Tonight  
35 LOW  
Mainly clear

Thursday  
71/42  
Partly sunny

### CONTACT US

541-963-3161  
Issue 48  
3 sections, 24 pages  
La Grande, Oregon

### HAVE A STORY IDEA?

Call The Observer newsroom at 541-963-3161 or send an email to news@lagrandeobserver.com. More contact info on Page 4A.



FRIDAY SEN. MERKLEY HOLDS TOWN HALL Online at lagrandeobserver.com

