



SPORTS

Tigers slam Grizzlies



STANGEL BISON RANCH

• Call: (541) 426-4919 • Email: stangelbison@gmail.com • Visit our website: stangelbisonranch.com •

- 100% Grass Fed & Finished Bison-
- Family Owned & Operated-
- Locally Grown & Harvested-
- Retail, Wholesale & Bulk Orders-
- Quarter, Half & Whole Custom Orders-
- Skulls & Robes-

GET READY FOR SUMMER BBQ'S!  

THE OBSERVER

SERVING UNION AND WALLAWA COUNTIES SINCE 1896

Weekend

FRIDAY-SUNDAY • April 26-28, 2019 • \$1.50

Good day to our valued subscriber Diane Higley of La Grande

A ticket and a smile

■ UC Sheriff's long-time Deputy Jim Gray retires

By Dick Mason
The Observer

The Union County Sheriff's Office is losing a long-time deputy who is as skilled at calming tense situations and making friends for his department as he is discussing traffic laws.

Deputy Jim Gray, who began working for the Union County Sheriff's Office in 1992, has retired.

"I'm 66 and this is a young man's game," said Gray, who finished his last patrol on Wednesday.

Gray, a special deputy to Sheriff Boyd Rasmussen, has worked 24 of the past 27 years for the sheriff's office. Much of this time he also worked for the Oregon Department of Transportation, from which he retired in 2003 after a 31-year career.

"I had the best of both worlds, two jobs I really enjoyed," said Gray, whose last job with ODOT was as its local equipment shop manager.

Cathie Falck, office manager at the Union County Sheriff's Office, said Gray is a very popular staff member.

"He is an excellent mentor. He has a wealth of knowledge and is always willing to help out," Falck said. "He is fun to be around."

She also lauds his professionalism.

"He was totally fair and impartial," she said.

Sgt. Ken Woodward of the Union County Sheriff's Office added that Gray has an uncanny ability to win people over, even when he is writing them a ticket.

"He is the only officer who gets thanked after giving people a citation," he said, explaining Gray has a knack for inspiring errant motorists to drive more safely.

See **Gray** / Page 5A



Union County citizens raise questions on student debt, voting rights, immigration

Amanda Weisbrod/The Observer

Sen. Jeff Merkley discussed corruption of democracy, the under-investment of the foundation for families and carbon pollution at Thursday's Union County town hall.

By Amanda Weisbrod
The Observer

College students, seniors and community members from all over Union County attended Sen. Jeff Merkley's (D-Ore.) town hall Thursday afternoon at Eastern Oregon University.

Topics of discussion included student debt, gun control legislation, immigration, health care, voting laws and the elimination of the electoral college. This was Merkley's 20th town hall in Union County and his 380th town hall in Oregon since he was elected senator in 2009.

Merkley kicked things off with describing his "big vision" for America and Oregon, which includes three main challenges: corruption of democracy, under-investment in foundations

for families to thrive, and climate change.

Corruption

When Merkley addressed what he sees as the current corruption of democracy, he listed "gerrymandering, a lot of voter suppression and intimidation" and "dark money in campaigns" as the main problems to which he has already proposed a possible solution.

"I have partnered with Senator (Tom) Udall (D) from New Mexico to introduce the For the People Act, which takes on these various issues as well as a tougher set of ethics regulations, and I'm hoping we can get a debate on the floor of the Senate," he said. "I think it's so important to the heart of our democracy because this

corruption is driving a lot of cynicism, and quite frankly, it's converting the government to one that is much more 'We the Powerful' than 'We the People.' We've got to reclaim the vision we were founded on."

"No matter who is in the Oval Office, they won't be able to accomplish anything without a functioning Senate."
— Jeff Merkley, U.S. Senator (D-Ore.)

HR 1, otherwise known as the For the People Act of 2019, passed the House on March 8 and includes legislation "to expand Americans' access to the ballot box, reduce the influence

See **Merkley** / Page 2A

Plea hearing dates pushed back for Cove murder case

By Amanda Weisbrod
The Observer

At Wednesday's plea hearings, attorneys for both Robert D. Lee and Steve Hamilton requested an extension of 60 days in order to further review evidence.

The new plea hearing is set for 1:15 p.m. June 25, and the defendants will appear in court via telecomm

from the Union County Jail.

Lee and Hamilton were arrested after indictments issued by a Union County Grand Jury following an investigation by the Union County Major Crimes Team into the November 2018 murder of Loretta Williams, of Cove. Both men were charged with murder and conspiracy to commit murder, although Lee was arrested in late February, about four weeks before Hamilton.

The Observer reported Williams called 911 at approximately 1:40 a.m. Nov. 17 to report a man in her backyard. The dispatchers heard her confront the man and then heard a loud noise. Deputies and troopers arrived within minutes

and found Williams dead of one or more apparent gunshot wounds.

Lee and Williams were married until July 2018, according to court records.

While bail has not been set for Lee, the court is holding a hearing at 4 p.m. April 29 to set bail for Hamilton, who has been held without bail since he was arrested March 21.

Under Oregon Revised Statute 135.240, a defendant has a right to post bail, unless the individual is charged with murder, aggravated murder or treason, in which case "release shall be denied when the proof is evident or the presumption strong that the person is guilty," according to www.oregonlaws.org.

Hamilton's lawyer, Kara Davis of Pendleton, argued this point at the plea hearing Wednesday afternoon, and Kelsie McDaniel, who is representing the state as the Union County District Attorney, concurred.

"The burden is on the state, to prove, and ... bail has to be set until the state has met their burden," Davis said. "I don't think my client really has the money to bail out, so I think it's kind of a moot point, but I do think bail needs to be set." ■

'Intersections' gallery shares the passion of four student artists

By Francisca Benitez
The Observer

Loss, growing up, childhood, imagination. The artists' work displayed in the second gallery for Eastern Oregon University's senior art capstone tells a variety of stories. One uses art to explore a concept, another shares a unique process, and some explore the personal, but all share their experiences through art.

Tonight at the Nightingale Gallery on EOU's campus from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. there will be a reception for the second capstone gallery for art majors at EOU. This is the artists' culmination of their undergraduate work. The gallery is entitled "Intersections," and will remain open for viewing until May 10.

The gallery features installations from Haley White, Audrey Lind, Tanisha Willis and Berenice Chavez Miraz. The mediums range from photography, collage and screen

printing to drawing, painting and subtractive drawing.

White was born and raised in La Grande. She said the most important part of her artwork to her is the process of putting the pieces together.

"I think it's more the process more than the product that I like," she said. She described how she creates her hand printed CMYK screen prints of her collages.

She starts by looking through magazines, old photos and old books, ripping out pages that interest her. Then she groups images that seem to go together. From there she creates a collage by cutting things out and putting them together.

White said the next step — screen printing the collages — is her favorite. She scans the collage and turns it into a bitmap using Photoshop. A bitmap is the image with tiny holes that she can push the ink through

See **Art** / Page 5A



Courtesy photos

(From top left to right) Audrey Lind's "Amalgamation 1," Berenice Chavez Meraz's "Self Portrait," Haley White's "Floret" and Tanisha Willis' "Respect."

INDEX

Classified.....4B Lottery.....2A Outdoors.....1B
Comics.....3B Record.....3A Spiritual.....6A
Crossword.....5B Obituaries.....3A Sports.....7A
Dear Abby.....8B Opinion.....4A

WEATHER

Full forecast on the back of B section

 **Friday**
36 LOW
Partly cloudy

 **Saturday**
57/30
Partly sunny

 **Sunday**
54/28
Partly sunny

CONTACT US

541-963-3161
Issue 49
2 sections, 16 pages
La Grande, Oregon

Email story ideas to news@lagrandeobserver.com.
More contact info on Page 4A.

MONDAY LOCAL MAN RAISES FUNDS FOR PARADISE, CALIF.

Online at lagrandeobserver.com

