



Ronald Bond/The Observer

Carolyn Howard plays the piano as several members of the La Grande softball team listen.

TIGERS

Continued from Page 1A
done (but) it got our team out there, got us involved and gave us an opportunity to connect with people in the community," she added.

The players stopped to visit with several residents who were in the downstairs lobby, some conversations lasting a few minutes and others much longer. At one end of the lobby, players knelt down or sat next to residents to ask them about their lives and what they used to do, and in turn exchanged their own tales or talk about the softball team. Across the way, How-

ard sat down and started playing the piano, with players Hayden Robinson and Presley Justice — and eventually a larger group — seemingly entranced by the melody that came from the piano keys.

Meanwhile, resident Joe Kenny talked with, and later placed a kiss on the hands of, two players who stopped to speak with him.

"It's always good to see (people from the community)," Kenny said.

Later, several players made additional social trips through the building, including getting a chance to view the cartoon cutouts crafted by Dan Kramer, a resident

who uses a bandsaw to cut out images of iconic characters and then paints them.

"They were going to see those residents who can't get out (of their rooms) and visit them," said Activities Assistant Denise Wheeler. "Some even went back to say goodbye."

The conversations inspired sophomore Sophie Bell, who said she would return to the residence in the future. Bell was one of the players who ventured beyond the lobby.

"I went into one of the resident's rooms, her name was Marilyn, and it was really nice to see the way her face lit up," she said. "It was really good

to talk to her, and I know it made her feel better to see us. (She was) saying, 'I don't want you to leave.'"

Senior Lexee Gomes also left feeling blessed by the experience.

"I loved it," she said. "It's fun to brighten up people's days when you know they don't have a lot of people to talk to. They told us we made their day several times."

Gooderham said that kind of outreach is something that should be done more often and by every sports team.

"It showed me we have a lot to be thankful for, and we should all try to take that extra (time) to give back to other people," she said. "It means more to them than we can imagine."

Gomes added this kind of outreach is especially important after the show of support the team has recently received.

"Since I've played softball we haven't done this much fundraising, so when you get this much money it's important to give back to your community and think of the people who donated money," she said, listing other areas the team has stepped up. "Being involved in the Little League parade (for example), I don't think our team realizes how big an impact that has on the little kids and

the community."

"I definitely think it's a really good opportunity for us to get out there to people who can't necessarily reach out to us," Bell added. "It's good that we can reach out and have a relationship with people who have done nothing but support us."

The trip garnered even more support for the players. Howard said in her interactions with the young women that she was able to see how much of a family atmosphere the team carried, and several of the residents, including Howard, are now hoping to make it to La Grande's remaining home games.

"I'm going to try," she said.

Gomes even learned one of the residents, who has a granddaughter on the team, has been attending the games and was a softball player herself.

"It was super sweet to know she comes to all our home games," Gomes said.

Both Bell and Gomes said they were glad to go as a team.

Bell, who called it a humbling experience, said she wants the residents to know "we're also here to be a part of their lives, and we're thankful for them. It was really good to show them we care, too." ■

COVE

Continued from Page 1A
had no objection to postponing the date that bail would be set.

Hamilton and Robert D. Lee 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. Lee is being held without bail. Both men will not again appear in court until the June 25 plea hearing. ■

FIRE

Continued from Page 1A
oper, has run GCT Wildfire Co. for years. Because his son was taking the firefighting class at LHS, he decided to reach out to LHS and invite the students in the class to come to a field day he was planning to put on for a group of about eight people who were almost done with their certifications.

"I wanted to make sure they had the opportunity to be legitimately qualified," Tsiatsos said of the high school students.

Wood said she was excited the students were getting the experience, and she was excited to attend the field day herself.

"This is my first year actually teaching this class

so I'm really thankful for this opportunity to come out and learn with the students," she said.

Wood said the class was started by Paul Anderes, former LHS teacher and current Union County Commissioner, and she said she has big shoes to fill.

"I just hope I can continue this program as successfully as he's been running it," she said.

The students seemed to be enjoying the field day and the time outside.

"It has been fun. We've learned a lot," said LHS junior Dylan Warren.

Warren said he is taking the class because it was recommended to him by other students, and he hopes to work as a wild-land firefighter.

"I was told the class was very fun and there was a lot of learning to do," he said.

Wood and Tsiatsos both said the students would be ready to join real fire crews after taking the class and attending the field day, although Wood said certain crews might require one or two more certifications. Either way, it's a good step toward securing a job as a firefighter.

"They can be employed through the state or federal government or through contractors like myself," Tsiatsos said. ■

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UNION

Continued from Page 1A

Options the city council has discussed at previous meetings include converting the three houses into vacation rentals; creating a recreational vehicle park at the site; and converting the ranger station into a community center with a professional grade kitchen that could host activities like family reunions or other gatherings.

The preparation of this year's proposed budget has gone more smoothly than in recent years in part because of new accounting software the city purchased.

"It has better report capability and gives us a better picture of where we are at,"

Wiggins said. "It makes it much easier to see what is going on."

Union's budget committee will likely vote later this month on a budget it will recommend to the city council. The council

will then conduct a public hearing on the budget up for adoption before voting.

Wiggins said the council may vote on adoption of the 2019-20 budget at its June 10 meeting. ■

SCHOOL

Continued from Page 1A

Company of Pendleton, will do paving work on Fourth Street between the high school and elementary school campuses. This work is expected to be done by June 14. At this time, all construction will be completed.

"We will start moving in June 17," Dixon said.

The process of moving in will be a slow and careful one. No more than two classrooms will be moved at a time from the old high school. All teachers will be in their classrooms by the time school starts Sept. 3, Dixon said.

Dixon also said the project is coming in under budget. Some of the extra money not spent on construction, he said, will be used for the Fourth Street paving work.

Project manager Joseph Hull, an owner of McCormack Construction, said a big reason the project is coming in under budget is that the North Powder School District used a contract manager/general contractor system to coordinate the work. Hull said the system allowed his company to provide greater input to the

school district on construction planning and budgeting throughout the building process.

"It made a remarkable difference," Hull said. "It really is the way to succeed."

Dixon said the construction has gone smoothly because McCormack Construction has been excellent to work with at every phase of the project.

"It has been a great process," he said.

Dixon said others who played key roles in the success of the project include Scott Marshall of Straightline Architects of Boise, Idaho, and John Frieboes, the North Powder School District's facilities manager.

Hull said his company was aided greatly by the mild early winter weather the region experienced. This allowed items like sidewalks and underground utilities to be put in during December and January before the ground froze in February.

Had harsh weather hit early in the winter instead of late, it would have been far from ideal.

"We would have had to stop (work on ground-related projects)," Hull said. "It would have shut down our momentum." ■

The new high school, about 100 feet west of the present one, is a one-story structure that is connected to the gym. Hull said this connection is a plus because it allows the high school and the gym to share an entrance, which he called "an efficient use of space."

The new high school has 13 classrooms, including a science room that will house lab space, an art room that will have a kiln for making pottery, and a home economics/life skills room.

Most of the construction has been funded with money from a \$3 million bond North Powder School District voters approved in May 2016 and a \$3 million matching grant the district received from the state.

The current facility was built more than 100 years ago and is becoming too costly to maintain. A decision on what to do with the old high school will be made by the school district later.

School district plans call for the present gym, built in the late 1930s, to continue to be used after the new one opens. Extensive seismic upgrades, funded by a state grant, were made in the gym in 2017. ■

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