

SPORTS

Imbler track senior Calvin Martin blessed to be alive and competing

Inside  
Travel Oregon tourists enjoy their stay in Baker, 2A

THE OBSERVER

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Weekend

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Good day to our valued subscriber Fred Zachow of La Grande

Bus fare eliminated, services expanded

By Dick Mason  
The Observer

Riders of Northeast Oregon Public Transit buses will soon have one less reason to withdraw cash from their bank's automatic teller machines.

Northeast Oregon Public Transit has announced it will eliminate all fares beginning July 1. This means every transportation service provided in Union County by NEOPT will be free less than two months from now.

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Imbler School District budget set to increase

By Dick Mason  
The Observer

The Imbler School District's budget may rise by 4.9% in 2019-20.

The district's budget committee is considering approving a general fund budget of \$5.54 million for 2019-20, which is \$261,929 more than the present year's budget.

The proposed budget would allow the school district to maintain all of its staff and programs, said Imbler School District Superintendent Angie Lakey-Campbell.

On the downside, the proposed spending plan calls for the school district to draw \$267,000 from its reserve fund to balance its budget.

"Anytime you have to draw from your contingency fund it is concerning," Lakey-Campbell said.

The superintendent added the school district would continue to have a strong reserve fund should the proposed budget be adopted.

"If an emergency comes up, we will be able to take care of it," Lakey-Campbell said.

She credits the school district's strong reserve fund to good decisions made by Imbler's school board in the past.

"The board has done a nice job of managing the district," she said. One reason the school district may have to draw from its reserve fund is

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Eastern Oregon teachers stay in school Wednesday

■ Educators across the state walk out to protest lack of funding for public schools

By Ronald Bond, Dick Mason and Amanda Weisbrod  
The Observer

Tens of thousands of teachers across the state of Oregon wore red and walked out of school Wednesday, protesting crowded classrooms and a lack of resources.

Oregon Public Broadcasting reported more than 20 school districts closed for at least part of the day in response to planned demonstrations around the state.

An estimated 25,000 students, educators and community members gathered at Tom McCall Waterfront Park in Portland before marching through the city, according to The Associated

Press. Most wore red to support the "Red for Ed" campaign that has taken hold nationwide since 2018 when West Virginia teachers held a 13-day strike that closed schools in all of the state's counties.

But while walkouts and protests amassed on the west side of the state Wednesday, Northeast Oregon schools carried on with business as usual — for the most part.

InterMountain Education Service District Superintendent Mark Mulvihill said the lack of walkouts in his district, which includes schools in Baker, Morrow, Umatilla and Union counties, was based on a decision calculated by local teachers and the Oregon Education Association — a labor union representing about 44,000 educators working in pub-

"We're in a historic time in Oregon, when the Legislature is trying to bring us back to those levels for the first time."  
— Mark Mulvihill, InterMountain Education Service District



lic schools and community colleges across the state.

"Local teachers, Oregon Education Association and leadership worked together to try to find a way that would support the right to demonstrate, but at the same time minimize the impact on student learning," Mulvihill said. "I think they should be commended for their collaboration to do that together."

Instead of cancelling classes for the day, teachers, administrators and students in many Union County school districts decided to wear red and/or hold rallies before or after school.

In the La Grande School District, most staff and

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Courtesy photos

TOP: Students in La Grande School District wore red on May 8 to support funding Oregon schools. BOTTOM: Teachers of Union School District held a sign before the school day started Wednesday.

MARKET PLACE FRESH FOODS OPENS



■ New grocery store management vows they have turned a new leaf

By Amanda Weisbrod  
The Observer

The grocery store at the corner of Fourth Street and Adams Avenue in La Grande has opened its automatic doors again, but this time, a new management team promises a community-centric approach.

Market Place Fresh Foods will hold its grand opening on May 15, but the store has been serving customers since May 3. The grand opening event will feature an outdoor barbecue with

Oregon Country Beef and a few other surprises, according to Lisa Snyder, marketing director for the grocery store.

The original opening date was set for March 1, but Snyder said that was only a goal, and the new management team wanted to take its time to consider community input before launching the project.

"We want this to be a memorable customer experience. We want it to be some place where people look forward to coming to."  
— Lisa Snyder, Market Place Fresh Foods marketing director

"We wanted to do this right," she said. "You don't ever have a second chance at a first impression."

Snyder said the store has undergone significant rebranding since it changed hands in May of 2018, and she wanted the community to know it's a completely different shopping experience than what Market Place Family Foods had to offer.

"Everyone assumes we're just re-opening the store that was here before," she said. "(But) we have a different management team and a new philosophy. I have zero doubt in my mind that they are going to make this successful."

The marketing director



Amanda Weisbrod/The Observer

LEFT: Market Place Fresh Foods marketing director Lisa Snyder said the new grocery store promises quality ingredients and fresh produce. RIGHT: La Grande City Councilor Mary Ann Miesner said she enjoyed her shopping experience Wednesday and will likely return soon.

said the core philosophies of the new store include providing what the community originally asked for, making a positive impact on the community by partnering with surrounding local businesses, and being a "destination" for shoppers, students and anyone who wants to stop by.

"We're striving to make life convenient and healthy for people," Snyder said. "We want to be a place

where people can congregate. It would be a shame to have all this space without people utilizing it."

From receiving a controversial \$500,000 loan from the Urban Renewal Agency in 2014 to its well-publicized closure in February 2018 due to bankruptcy after just 15 months in business, the short history of the corner grocery store has been a roller

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Friday 44 Low Clear  
Saturday 80/49 Sunny and warm  
Sunday 82/48 Mostly sunny

CONTACT US

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

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