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Good day to our valued subscriber Melinda Becker-Bisenius of La Grande

Reaching out to seniors

■ May is Older Americans Month

By Dick Mason
The Observer

An often overlooked portion of President John F. Kennedy's legacy is again coming into sharp focus.

May is Older Americans Month, designated by Kennedy in 1963 in collaboration with the National Council of Senior Citizens. The designation is again receiving significant attention from organizations including the Union County Senior Center, which has planned a number of activities to commemorate it — and at the same time draw more seniors to the facility.

"We want to invite new seniors (to the senior center) so they can learn what

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Elgin waits for grant, announces contest winners

■ Upcoming City Council meeting moved to June 25

By Amanda Weisbrod
The Observer

Not much was on the agenda for Elgin's City Council meeting Tuesday night, but updates on grant funding, flooding and the city's Cleanup Day were brought to the floor. The council also recognized the winners for the annual "If I Were Mayor..." contest.

Shay Talley, who provides city engineering services through JUB Engineers, said Elgin has not yet received the block grant funding that is to be provided by Business Oregon because the city is still waiting on the contract agreement. This almost \$500,000 grant, which was awarded to Elgin in March, will help fund the

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Fresh produce, live music and artisan wares

By Amanda Weisbrod
The Observer

From handmade wares to homegrown produce, find everything local at the La Grande Farmers Market's opening day May 18 from 9 a.m. to noon.

Jessica Bogard, La Grande Farmers Market manager, took on her new role in November and said she expects at least 50 vendors at the market's opening day in Max Square on the corner of Fourth Street and Adams Avenue, but shoppers will see anywhere from 30-50 vendors during regular Saturday markets.

The 2019 La Grande Farmers Market season runs from May 18 to Oct. 29, and the market will be open from 3:30 p.m. to 6 p.m. on Tuesdays and 9 a.m. to noon on Saturdays, according to www.la.grandefarmersmarket.org.

The website also notes the market is much more than just a place to shop; it's also a place to "interact with local farmers, artists, musicians, craftsmen and friends" while enhancing "the economic sustainability of our region's farms by providing a venue for the exchange of quality locally grown goods while creating

a vibrant community gathering place."

The main goal of the market, however, is to give vendors a place to be successful, according to Bogard. As she puts it, "if they're not successful, we're not successful."

"The La Grande Farmers Market is a business incubator, and provides a sense of community," she said. "We provide a place where handmade and hand-grown goods can be sold in an open market by the vendors."

Bogard, who has been on the farmers market board for the past eight years, said

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Courtesy photos

The La Grande Farmers Market will be held every Tuesday and Saturday in Max Square on the corner of Fourth Street and Adams Avenue from May 18 to Oct. 29.

Changing times on local gasoline scene

■ More stations offering self-service

By Dick Mason
The Observer

Union County residents are receiving an increasing number of opportunities to pump their own gas, and many motorists appear to be embracing it.

At least eight gas stations throughout the county are now providing motorists with the option of pumping their own fuel rather than having an attendant do it for them.

Union County gas stations have had the opportunity to do this since Jan. 1, 2018, when a self-service law took effect in Oregon for counties with less than 40,000 residents. The law allows stations in these counties to offer self-service at all hours.

The option is revolutionary because state law has mandated that gas be pumped by attendants during business hours since 1951, according to Oregon Public Broadcasting. Today, Oregon and New Jersey are the only states in which self-service is not available everywhere.

The Texaco station at 2112 Island Ave. is one of at least two La Grande stations that started offering a self-service option in early April. The vast majority of drivers now getting gas at the station are pumping their own, according to the assistant manager, John Malcher.

Tyler Nice, a supervisor at the station, said driv-

ers from outside Oregon quickly welcomed the option.

"They are used to (self-service) and love pumping their own gas because they don't have to wait," Nice said.

A number of local motorists, though, did not feel the same way, at least initially.

"Some people were upset because they were not familiar with (self-service)," Nice said.

Malcher said many of these people picked up on how to pump their own gas quickly and now like the self-service. He said that before the Texaco station began offering self-service, the station had employees who pumped gas full-time. These employees have been reassigned to maintenance and utilitarian duties.

Another La Grande station that began offering a self-service option this year is Oak Street Mobil, which began doing so April 1. Customers there have the option of pumping their own gas or having an attendant do it. Kyndra Ritchie, a supervisor at Oak Street Mobil, said the



Dick Mason/The Observer

Nathaniel Thompson of Portland fills his vehicle with gasoline at Oak Street Mobil Tuesday morning.

vast majority of the station's customers prefer to pump their own gas. She said some customers new to pumping gas have made mistakes that have caused

problems. For example, one person drove off with the fuel pump nozzle was still attached to the vehicle, causing minor damage.

La Grande's Shell gas station at 2614 Island Ave. has offered a self-service option since January of 2018, but attendants still come out to greet motorists and offer them service. This can surprise motorists from out of state.

"Sometimes they are startled. They don't know what we are here for," said Cat Henderson, a cashier for the Shell station.

She said the Shell staff is more than happy to pump gas for customers. "Some have lived their whole lives in Oregon. They don't want to pump their own gas since that is how they grew up (not pumping gas). That's what we are here for," Henderson said.

She noted that when the weather is bad, people who otherwise pump their own gas might want to let attendants do it instead. She said with a laugh that Oregonians have gotten a little "spoiled" because for years they haven't had to pump their gas in inclement weather.

At the Chevron Gem Stop on Island Avenue, which also provides the self-service option, about half of the customers take the opportunity to pump their own fuel. Bimon Lavror, an attendant, said some customers are not familiar with the process of pumping gas and he periodically sees confused looks on the faces of people he assists.

Motorists can also choose self-service or be served by an attendant at La Grande Chevron on Adams Avenue. About 20% of its customers choose the self-service option, said Brian Bradley, an attendant there. He estimates that between 30 and 35% of the motorists his station serves are from

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Full forecast on the back of B section



Tonight
49 LOW
Showers around



Thursday
63/45
Cloudy, showers

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