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Good day to our valued subscriber Joel Knight of Union

EHS
graduate
earns
awardBy Trish Yerges
For The Observer

Marc McFetridge, formerly of Enterprise and now a USDA agricultural economist working in Washington, D.C., recently received a Gears of Government President's Award by the Office of Management and Budget within the Executive Office of the President.

McFetridge is a 1996 graduate of Enterprise High School and the son of Larry and Davise McFetridge, a fourth-generation farmer. He graduated from Oregon State University in 2001 with a bachelor of science degree in agricultural business management and in 2004 with a master's of science in agriculture and resource economics.

The award he received was for his role on the "Streamlining of Section 32 Review and Approval Process" team for the Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS). The team is composed of McFetridge, Robert Wintersteen, Michael Sheats and Roger Cryan.

"I am sharing the recognition with my colleagues," McFetridge said. "This is a team award, and we all worked very hard. It is a great honor to be recognized for all of our hard work. We were all shocked that we were even being considered for a Presidential award."

The AMS team worked to streamline the way the department provides wholesome food to all Americans through participating food banks and school lunch programs.

"Section 32 purchase process is a way for the USDA to purchase commodities that are in oversupply and provide those commodities to various food nutrition assistance programs, namely food banks," he said.

The updated process is more efficient and saves a lot

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Ronald Bond/The Observer

La Grande Fire Department's new Medic 2 made its debut last week. The 2019 ambulance replaced a 1996 model.

New wheels for the fleet

By Ronald Bond
The Observer

The La Grande Fire Department has upgraded its ambulance fleet.

The department's new 2019 Chevrolet model Medic 2 ambulance debuted last week and has already been put to use, concluding a year-long process to bring the new unit to town.

"This process started with interim chief Emmitt Cornford. He and City Manager Robert Strope got together and talked about (the department's) major needs. The need at the time was replacing an am-

bulance," La Grande Fire Chief Les Thomas said.

Strope and Cornford met while the city was building its budget for 2018-19 early last year.

"The city has an ending cash balance, and one of the things we take a look at each year is capital expenditures we have and what we can include in the budget," Strope explained.

Strope said that when the fire department initially brought forth its budget, it didn't include the cost for a new ambulance. The talks about the needs for the department followed, and it was determined that

an ambulance was a justifiable expense.

"We included funding to purchase a new ambulance," Strope said of the 2018-19 city budget.

Of the \$180,000 budgeted for the new ambulance, \$135,000 was from the capital expenditures fund. The remaining \$45,000 came from money that had been set aside in previous years and earmarked for fire services.

Thomas said when he took over in June of 2018 as fire chief, he knew the \$180,000 for the ambulance was in the budget. The process, he said, then

went into deciding on the necessary specifics, bidding and getting the ambulance built. He added the department sought a balance "between being fiscally responsible and conservative" while also ensuring the vehicle met the department's needs.

"It has to be four-wheel drive because of our weather," Thomas said. "It has to have enough space obviously for the occupants and then enough room to give the utmost care (to patients)."

The department was able to keep the new

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School
district
to add
teachersBy Dick Mason
The Observer

The La Grande School District may soon have physical education teachers at each of its three grade schools plus a second counselor at its middle school.

The La Grande School District's budget committee voted to recommend the school board adopt a general fund budget of \$25.1 million, up 1.5% from the present year's budget.

The proposed budget would result in the school district adding three physical education teachers, one at each of its elementary schools. The school district presently has no grade school PE teachers.

A PE teacher would be added at Central Elementary by not filling a certified librarian position opening created by a resignation. Central's library would then be served solely by a library assistant now at the school. This move would not cost the school district additional funding.

"It would be budget neutral," said La Grande School District Superintendent George Mendoza.

The two other grade school PE positions and the middle school counselor would be added by taking up to \$300,000 from the district's reserve fund.

Mendoza said that taking this money from the reserve fund would not have negative budget implications if the Student Success Act, passed by the Legislature earlier this month, takes effect. The Student Success Act would impose a business tax that would raise \$1 billion a year for public schools in Oregon.

Mendoza noted though that there is a chance an initiative petition may be placed before voters asking them to repeal the Student Success Act. Should voters approve such a petition, the La Grande School District, after adding the PE teachers and counselor, would face a budget crunch that would force it to draw down other funds, possibly including ones for building maintenance.

The superintendent and the budget committee want to have physical education teachers at all district grade schools because this would make it easier for the school district to meet state standards for PE instruction. Their presence would also free up school counselors to spend more time helping students in need of

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LMS assistant principal off to Nyssa

By Dick Mason
The Observer

La Grande Middle School is losing an assistant principal whose well of optimism for his students never runs dry.

Brett Jackman, LMS's full-time assistant principal since 2007, will step down at the end of June to become the new principal of Nyssa High School.

"It is a great opportunity, but I have mixed emotions about leaving. There are so many incredible people at this school and in the community," said Jackman, who grew up in La Grande.

Jackman said he has loved his job at LMS and the 13 years have passed quickly.

"It has flown by," he said.

Jackman attributes this to how much he enjoys his job and its often electric pace.

"It has been crazy hectic (at times)," the educator said.

Jackman's focus has long been on redirecting students going in the wrong direction.

"He is student centered and always looking for kids (who have issues) to change. Brett is always optimistic,"



Dick Mason/The Observer

Brett Jackman, shown working at his desk Thursday, is leaving his post at La Grande Middle School to become the principal of Nyssa High School.

said LMS Principal Kyle McKinney. Jackman is praised by many at LMS as someone who reaches out in a compassionate manner to students.

"He leads with a kind, constant heart. He likes to give students second chances," said social studies teacher Anne Marie Fritz.

McKinney echoed this sentiment. "He will do anything for students, parents and staff, almost to a fault," the LMS principal said.

Kiel Carson, who teaches social studies at LMS, agreed.

"Brett is a very giving, kindhearted

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WEATHER Full forecast on the back of B section

Friday 54 Low Patchy clouds
Saturday 81/52 Partly sunny
Sunday 82/49 Sunshine and warm

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Email story ideas to
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More contact info
on Page 4A.

MONDAY

FORTY YEARS OF BECKIE'S DANCE

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