

Curtain

opens

today

By Dick Mason

These three bulls will not be

giving cowboys any hair-rais-

ing rides at this week's Eastern Oregon Livestock Show,

but odds are they will give spectators many reasons to

event, which opens today. Freestyle bullfighting, one

come to their feet at the Union

of the fastest growing sports

in rodeo, will debut at EOLS

June 6. The PRCA event will

feature three cowboys and

three bulls from Prairie City in celebration of the 10th an-

nual Ed Miller Xtreme Bull

Riding competition at EOLS, held in Union. The bull riding

will be run in conjunction with freestyle bull fighting at

Freestyle bullfighting is

which a bullfighter avoids the

bull he's confronting by dodg-

ing, jumping and using a bar-

rel just as a rodeo clown does.

Bullfighters are awarded points when they exhibit con-

trol over the direction of the

bull with fakes, performing

creative tricks ranging from

"It is the most intense

minute in sports," said Trever

Hamsher of Prairie City, the

owner of Hamsher Fighting

Bulls and a former freestyle

jumps to flips.

bullfighter.

a 60-second competition in

the EOLS arena.





Follow us on the web

Flower donation gives residents a lift

By Dick Mason

Many seniors at Wildflower Lodge are getting a chance to put their green thumbs to good use thanks to La Grande Middle School students.

Many of the flowers grown by the students for the annual LMS Plant Sale were recently donated, following the encouragement of students, to Wildflower Lodge Assisted Living and Memory Care, a facility in La Grande

About six pickup-truckloads of flowers were donated. The flowers included marigolds, zinnias and coleus varieties. The flowers were planted in boxes and flowerbeds, many in Wildflower's courtyard.

Jenna Wright, Wildflower's community relations director, said residents welcomed the chance to plant the flowers and care for them because of their backgrounds.

"A lot of them were farmers or (grew) gardens and flowerbeds,"Wright said.

Residents who have enjoyed planting the flowers include Patty Hukari.

"I want to make it pretty for all residents," Hukari

Wright said Wildflower can make planting opportunities available to residents on a small sale on its own but not to the extent it did this year with help from LMS.

Plants grown by LMS students were also donated to Kids Club at Riveria Activity Center and La Grande's community garden.

Kathy Nickerson, an LMS science teacher who helps direct the yearly plant sale, said the donations made by the school heighten the students' awareness of the needs of others.

"It is important for us to always look beyond ourselves," Nickerson said.

Students gain business experience via the annual project, selling the plants they've grown to the public.

See **Flowers** / Page 5A



Beckie's Studio tap dance students, from left, Leela Andrew, Brianna Brown, Alya Collins, Alexys McCall and Avie Durrant, practice Wednesday.

Forty years of dancing

By Trish Yerges

Beckie's Studio of Dance, 110 Depot St. in La Grande, founded by professional Portland dancer Beckie Thompson-Hendrickson, is celebrating its 40th anniversary.

The dance school teaches dance language, pre-ballet, ballet, pointe classes, beginning to advance Broadway tap lessons, jazz and hip-hop, senior company jazz, acrobatics and tumbling. The staff at the school includes Betsy Carson, Chelsie Musgrove and Heather Watson, all former students of Thompson-Hendrickson, All the advanced classes are personally taught by Thompson-Hendrickson, or "Teacher Beckie" as some students respectfully call her.

"The three teachers at my studio have been with me since they were little girls and are now in their mid-30s," said Thompson-Hendrickson. "Every year, two to three times a year, we travel outside of La Grande to take workshops and master classes, and they also take teacher training classes to continue teaching at my studio."

Thompson-Hendrickson



Acrobatics and tumbling students Avery Myer (left), Ada Robinson (center), Alexys McCall (right) and Brianna Brown (back right) practice Wednesday afternoon.

founded her studio in 1979 when she moved to La Grande from Portland to raise her children away from the hustle and bustle of the city.

"It was a little bit of a cultural change for me coming here, but not long after I arrived, an opportunity to teach dance opened up

with the City of La Grande, and I applied for it," she said. "That same year I also opened my dance studio at

211 Fir Street." There were four or five applicants for the job, and she was offered the position. She credits this, in part, to her having dance certificates, something she worked hard to earn through her dance education.

"I've danced all my life, starting at age 3 with the Academy of Dance Arts, where I received my first certificate," she said. "I've earned other certificates since then from other schools."

Thompson-Hendrickson's See **Dance** / Page 5A

Hamsher is providing the three purebred Spanish fighting bulls for the freestyle

> "All animals have fight or flight instincts. These bulls are bred for fight, not flight," Hamsher said. "A deer runs from you, (but) these bulls

run at you." The bulls are named Night Moves, Leapfrog and Super Bee. Night Moves is so named because Hamsher drove 26 hours straight to get him after learning the bull was for sale. Leapfrog acquired his name after a friend named Frog once had to jump over the bull to avoid being injured by him, and Super Bee was named for his bumble bee-like stripes.

Hamsher said the three bulls get along well when they are together as a group and appear even-tempered. Once alone, though, their aggressive nature surfaces.

"It is like a light switch when they are by themselves," he said. "They feel threatened."

He said the personalities of his bulls vary a bit from day

"It depends on which side of the hay they get up on," Hamsher said.

Hamsher has provided stock for the Eastern Oregon See **EOLS** / Page 5A

Groups object to raven-poisoning plan

By Jayson Jacoby WesCom News Service

Some environmental groups are objecting to a state plan to poison up to 1,500 ravens in Baker County over three years in an effort to reduce the birds' predation on sage grouse eggs.

The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife in April 2018 applied for federal permits to kill the ravens, which are protected under the federal Migratory Birds Treaty Act.

The agency has not received permits from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, said Michelle Dennehy, an ODFW spokesperson.

The poisoning of ravens will not hap-

pen until 2020 at the earliest, she said. Environmental groups including Oregon Wild, The Humane Society and the Center for Biological Diversity oppose the plan, according to a story in The Oregonian.

ODFW's proposed strategy is part of "an unfortunate pattern of wildlife agencies scapegoating one wildlife species for the decline of another" without addressing primary causes of decline, said Bob Sallinger, conservation director at the Portland Audubon Society.

Researchers have identified other potential causes of sage grouse population decline, including conversion of sagebrush land to agriculture, livestock grazing, drought and West Nile virus. Studies showing ravens' effect on sage grouse nesting were conducted in Nevada, and Oregon "has not produced adequate science to support killing ravens," Sallinger wrote on the Portland Audubon website.

Those studies showed that ravens were responsible for 53 percent of sage grouse nest failures in parts of Nevada.

(Badgers were the second most common cause, at 25 percent, followed by coyotes at 14 percent.)

ODFW is focusing on Baker County because its sage grouse population has declined by an estimated 75 percent since

See Ravens / Page 5A

HAVE A STORY IDEA?

Call The Observer newsroom at 541-963-3161 or send an email to news@lagrandeobserver.com.



INDEX

Classified......4B Horoscope.....5B Opinion... Comics........3B Letters.......4A Sports... Crossword.....5B Lottery......2A Sudoku. Dear Abby8B Record3A Home1B Obituaries.....3A

.6A

Tonight **44** LOW



CONTACT US 541-963-3161

Issue 65 2 sections, 16 pages La Grande, Oregon



