

SAFETY

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students. Sixth-graders completed them in their home room class, and seventh- and eighth-graders did so in their advisory class.

The survey showed that respondents believe there aren't enough signs warning drivers of the need to slow down in a school zone, that people tend to drive too fast down Fourth Street and that there is a good law enforcement presence before and after school on the streets surrounding LMS.

The need for flashing school zone warning lights on Fourth Street is an issue La Grande School District Superintendent George Mendoza said the school district and the City of La Grande have been working together to address in recent months.

Joseph Waite, the La Grande School District's bond and facilities manager, said the school district and the city are looking to hire a coordinator for the process of writing applications for Safe Routes to Schools grants. Safe Routes to School funding is often used to pay for the installation of flashing warning lights in school zones as well as crosswalks and sidewalks that make it easier for students to walk or bike to school.

The Safe Routes to Schools coordinator would work for the city and be hired on a three-year grant,

Waite said. The Safe Routes to School program has multiple funding sources including the federal government.

LMS Principal Kyle McKinney said flashing warning lights would be a welcome addition in front of the school because many people drive too fast down Fourth Street and often are not paying attention.

"They are looking at their phones and in a hurry with work on their minds," McKinney said.

The principal noted that about 10 years ago his son Marcus, then a LMS student, sustained a minor hip abrasion when a vehicle hit him on Fourth Street.

"He was in the crosswalk," McKinney said.

The LMS principal, who often serves as a crossing guard, has almost been hit several times himself.

McKinney said he once was walking to the middle of Fourth Street to alert drivers that students were

about to cross when he saw a car about 200 feet away coming toward him at about 30 miles per hour.

"I kept waiting for it to stop or slow down," he said. It never did.

The vehicle whizzed past McKinney, who had stepped back about three feet.

"I wish I had gotten its license number," he said.

The principal said the traffic problem in front of LMS has increased since he became principal 16 years ago because LMS's enrollment has grown from 350 students to 550, which means more parents are dropping off and picking up their sons and daughters. The congestion problem was reduced about three years ago when the school district created a north side cut-out on K Avenue where parents can park.

"That has been a huge plus," said McKinney, who said previously cars were sometimes double parked on Fourth Street.



Dick Mason/The Observer

La Grande Middle School students cross at a Fourth Street crosswalk following the final day of school Monday. Students have expressed concerns about safety on the busy street, and want flashing warning lights installed to increase safety.

The principal said he was impressed by the concerns expressed by students in

the Fourth Street safety survey. "Before, I didn't know if

they realized (the need for extreme caution)," McKinney said.

SALE

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Country Media nor EO Media Group has proposed to buy any of the real estate at this point. Country Media's purchase of the coastal papers would include the Smith River printing press but not the building that houses it, McCool said.

Representatives of the two potential buyers couldn't be reached for comment Tuesday morning.

Western Communications' reorganization plan estimated that all the newspaper operations, which include The Union Democrat in Sonora, California, and The Redmond Spokesman, which prints weekly, would be worth \$5 million to \$10 million.

"The numbers came in about where we thought they would," said Owen Van Essen of the newspaper brokerage Dirks, Van Essen, Murray & April. "They're factoring in the trends of the business."

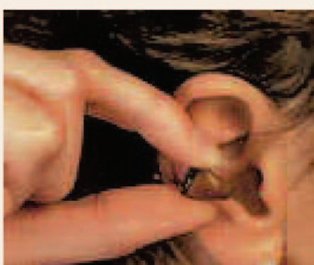
The Triplicate, which has a circulation of 3,500, and Pilot, circulation 4,000, are published Wednesdays and Saturdays. The two newspapers and Smith River printing facility employ 34 people.

The Observer in La Grande, circulation 3,250, and Baker City Herald, circulation 1,900, publish Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays and employ a combined 24 people.

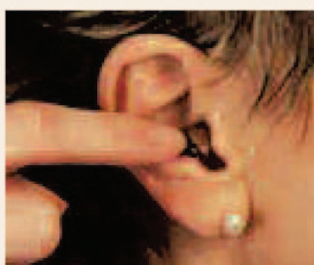
The two Northeast Oregon newspapers are already printed by EO Media Group, which owns the East Oregonian in Pendleton and Hermiston Herald, among other publications.

McCool said she's not permitted to talk about bids submitted for The Bulletin, The Redmond Spokesman or The Union Democrat until a proposed sale comes before the court.

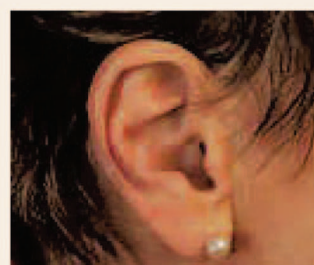
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