



'Newsies' hits the Elgin Opera House stage  
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SEPTEMBER 18, 2019

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# 'Newsies' in Elgin

SERVING UNION AND WALLOWA COUNTIES SINCE 1896

# THE OBSERVER

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Good day to our valued subscriber Betty Funkhouser of La Grande

ENROLLMENT

## School numbers keep on climbing

By Dick Mason  
The Observer

Enrollment is on the upswing for many school districts in Union and Wallowa counties.

Local superintendents are reporting that enrollment is up or unchanged for the majority of the school districts, including La Grande.

The La Grande School District has 2,378 students, up at least 16 from 2018-19 when enrollment ranged from 2,340 to 2,366, said Superintendent George Mendoza.

This marks the fourth time in five years La Grande's enrollment has risen. It was down slightly or virtually unchanged in 2018-19, but the previous three years it was up an average of 65 students a year, according to reports the school district makes to the state each Oct. 1.

Mendoza is encouraged by this trend.

"We always hope to see growth," he said.

The superintendent said the additional funding the school district will receive as a result of the enrollment increase will help the district to continue to add more services and support for students.

School districts in Oregon receive at least \$6,000 from the state per student.

Enrollment is also up in the Elgin, Imbler, Union, Joseph, Troy and Wallowa school districts.

Elgin experienced the biggest percentage increase of any Union County school district. Elgin's enrollment is 355, up 36 students from the end of the 2018-19 school year, a jump of 10%.

Elgin School District Superintendent Dianne Greif credits much of the increase to this fall's kindergarten class of 46.

"Normally we have 30 to 35 kindergarten students," Greif said.

Enrollment at Stella  
See **Schools** / Page 5A



## LADD CANYON MAKEOVER

■ Brush Creek getting 4,500-foot channel as part of \$30 million ODOT project

By Dick Mason  
The Observer

Brush Creek, located near where the Oregon Trail ran more than 150 years ago in Ladd Canyon, is getting a new 4,500-foot channel, one stronger than the oxen pioneers used to pull their wagons over this area's rugged terrain.

The channel is being installed as part of the Oregon Department of Transportation's \$30 million Ladd Canyon Freight Improvement Project, which began in April. The new channel is needed to make way for the addition of a third eastbound lane on I-84 in 2020, which will run from the west entrance of Ladd Canyon east for 1.5 miles.

Brush Creek is posing an obstacle for ODOT because a  
See **Ladd** / Page 5A



Dick Mason/The Observer

Top photo: Excavation work is done in Ladd Canyon for a new channel for Brush Creek.  
Above: The new channel will feature concrete weirs. Wood forms for these weirs are shown.



Dick Mason/The Observer

Tom Strandberg, foreground, and Josh McCullough, both of the Oregon Department of Transportation, examine a site where fish from Brush Creek are being protected while the stream while channel work is done.

## Two file to run for sheriff

■ Bill Miller to challenge Boyd Rasmussen in 2020

By Dick Mason  
The Observer

The stage is being set for Union County's first contested race for sheriff since 2004.

Union County Sheriff Boyd Rasmussen and Bill Miller, who works for Union County Community Corrections, have both filed for the 2020 election for Union County Sheriff.

Rasmussen was elected in a contested race in 2004 and is competing his 15th year as sheriff. He was reelected to four-year terms in 2008, 2012 and 2016 in uncontested races.

"It has been an honor to serve as your Union County Sheriff the last 14 years. I am proud of our Sheriff's Office and the work we do in keeping Union County safe and livable. It has been gratifying to work with the  
See **Sheriff** / Page 5A

## New housing to cater to seniors

■ Development of 55 and older neighborhood in the works

By Sabrina Thompson  
The Observer

New housing is coming to La Grande for those age 55 and older. Elevation Pointe, to be constructed on the 400 block of 16th Street, will be a community of 21 condominiums and eight single-family homes. Infrastructure work on the site began six months ago, and construction of the dwellings is planned to begin in October, according to a press release.

GCT Land Management is in charge of the project and owner Gust Tsiatsos is the general contractor. Tsiatsos said the active adult community will fill a residential housing gap in the region.

"You can see it in the statistics," Tsiatsos said. "Elevation Pointe will take pressure off the housing market at a certain price point, and offer an attractive housing option appealing to seniors' lifestyles and tastes."

Elevation Pointe is described in the press release  
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WEATHER Full forecast on the back of B section

Tonight 46 Low Cloudy  
Thursday 62/44 A stray shower

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