

Fishtrap Fireside continues



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Good day to our valued subscriber Freda Herron of La Grande

GRA has bright future

By Sabrina Thompson
The Observer

Grande Ronde Academy's footprint has grown, and along with it the school's future. After Valley Fellowship Church sold the land to GRA in August, the private school took over the remainder of the building that it had been sharing with the church for the last five years. This move could mean an increase in enrollment and course offerings.

Founded in 2001, GRA is an interdenominational Christian school that teaches kindergarten through eighth grade. Currently the school has 35 students enrolled with class sizes of about eight students in combined grade classrooms. The expansion of the school's property will provide more room for additional students, according to the school's director, Phillip O'Reilly.

"It also communicates a level of stability to the community that we are here to stay," O'Reilly said.

Before taking over the building that housed Valley Fellowship Church, GRA shared the auditorium and kitchen spaces and rented the classrooms. Being in a church has proven beneficial, O'Reilly noted, because it has many useful facilities, such as a kitchen for the school to serve hot lunches and the auditorium to hold weekly chapel services.

Having the entire building to use provides the possibility of expanding education to ninth and 10th grades and adding new science labs and programs. Because the school has just recently acquired the space, O'Reilly said, the administrators are focused on reorganizing and learning the best ways to utilize the facilities for the students who are currently enrolled.

"We are in the embryonic stages," O'Reilly said. "We are considering creating a capital

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Courtesy photo

Oliver "Ollie" Hopkins shared his love of music with his father. Ollie passed away Sept. 8 from complications from the flu, but his legacy will live on in a toy drive started by those who loved him.

'OLLIE'S Obnoxious TOY DRIVE'

■ Donated toys memorialize a boy who brought joy

By Sabrina Thompson
The Observer

Loud and always smiling. That is how friends and family describe Oliver Hopkins, an 8-year-old boy from La Grande. Known to everyone as Ollie, the little boy brought joy and happiness to those around him, according to a family friend, Tashia DeCoteau. Ollie passed away Sept. 8 from complications from the flu, but his legacy will live on in a toy drive started by those who knew him and loved him.

Ollie was born Oct. 18, 2010, with tumors on his eyes that could not be removed. In addition to being blind, he was nonverbal and had health issues that limited his mobility. When Ollie got sick, he had to fight harder than most, DeCoteau said, yet his early death was a shock to his family and friends.

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Courtesy photo

More than \$2,000 worth of toys have come in through Ollie's Obnoxious Toy Drive so far.



Courtesy photo

Ollie's friends and family collected donations outside Wal-Mart. All proceeds from the toy drive will be donated to OHSU Doernbecher Children's Hospital in Portland.

Elgin High School educator recognized by FFA

■ Daniel Bolen selected to receive Honorary American FFA Degree

By Dick Mason
The Observer

An Elgin High School agricultural sciences teacher, who is skilled at steering students in the right direction in the classroom and on the road, is being saluted by the FFA.

Daniel Bolen has been selected to receive the Honorary American FFA Degree. Bolen, who is also an Elgin



Bolen

Union County Commissioner Paul Anderes, who taught agricultural sciences for at least 20 years at La Grande High School, where he was also its FFA adviser.

The Honorary American FFA Degree is awarded to individuals who have provided exceptional service

school bus driver, is one of just 51 people in the United States selected for the award this year.

"It is one of the three highest awards bestowed in FFA," said

on a national level to agriculture, agricultural education, or FFA. Honorees are teachers who have created high-quality agricultural education programs that inspire and motivate their students to strive for success, according to an FFA news release.

"I am excited and honored. What makes it so special is that I was selected by my colleagues in Eastern Oregon," said Bolen, who is beginning his sixth year of teaching at Elgin High School and 13th overall.

Bolen will receive his award Nov. 1 during an onstage ceremony at the

2019 National FFA Convention & Expo in Indianapolis, Indiana.

Elgin School District Superintendent Dianne Greif said Bolen is an excellent teacher, one who encourages students to reach their full potential by participating in programs such as FFA and career technical education, that provide vocational training.

"These programs help students develop skills they need to be successful," Greif said.

Anderes said Bolen is an innovative educator who has a keen

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