

Beware of fake gold products

By Sabrina Thompson
The Observer

People should be on the lookout for an individual who might try to scam them with fake gold.

According to David Gately, who owns La Grande Gold and Silver with his father, someone has been selling rings that are made to look like gold to people at gas stations and in

parking lots.

Gately said he believes it is the same person doing this around Northeast Oregon, including in Pendleton, Baker City and La Grande. He said those who have been scammed give the same description: a man of average height who appears to be of Middle Eastern or Indian descent.

He is selling large square

rings with 18k stamped on the inside of the band, out of a silver BMW SUV, often claiming he lost his wallet and needs money for gas.

The rings have designs carved into the top and are about the size of class rings. According to Gately, if the rings were real gold, they would be worth more than the \$50 to \$100 dollars this man sells them for.

“It’s almost always that same type of ring, stamped with an 18k, but it’s not 18 karats,” Gately said.

The rings this man is selling are not made of real gold. When people bring the rings in to La Grande Gold and Silver to sell, Gately

tests them with nitric acid, which will eat through the metal if it’s not real gold.

“It’s hard to tell without training,” Gately said. “(The rings) are heavy like gold, but not quite heavy enough.”

Gately first saw the scam in 2018. There were only around five or six people that year who came into the store with the fake rings to sell. This year, there have been 20 people who have come in hoping to make back the money they gave the man.

There has also been an instance at Baker City Gold and Silver where someone was scammed under the same circumstances in the

past few months, according to the store’s owner.

“He’s taking money from people who don’t really have it to give,” Gately said.

The La Grande police have told Gately there is nothing they can do unless someone who has been scammed chooses to press charges. Police said they do have one report on file but not enough information to pursue an investigation.

Gately said he has not seen the man in person, except for a possible visit a year ago when a man fitting the description came in to sell multiple fake gold rings, but he took them back when told they were not real.



Courtesy Photo

The rings being used to scam people look similar to this one, with an 18k stamped on the inside of the ring. There is often a different design on top.

LIBERTY

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in 2017 and replaced by the new Central school building at Second and H Street.

The bricks resemble those of the original theater’s entrance before it closed six decades ago and are a prominent part of the re-creation of the facade of the historic building. The entrance will include not only the canopy but two sets of double doors on either side of a box office.

Long-range plans for the Liberty Complex, which contains the Liberty Theatre building and the now vacant and historic Putnam building next to it, include a bakery, an extensive kitchen and eating area, a stage for entertainers, skylights, a dressing room for theater performers, offices, living quarters and much more. The Putnam building will be restored and will match the historic look of the Liberty Theatre.

Much of the Liberty Complex work is being funded by grants, including one for \$200,000 received earlier this year from the Oregon Main Street Proj-

ect. O’Toole said \$100,000 of this grant went to the Liberty Theatre and \$100,000 went to the Putnam building restoration.

The Putnam building is owned by Dale and Ginny Mammen of La Grande. Dale Mammen is a leader of the Liberty Theatre restoration project and a historical preservation consultant for the Liberty Theatre Foundation’s staff.

Crews are also continuing to do extensive work on restoring the interior of the Liberty Theatre. The theater was built in 1910 and closed in 1959, after which its facade and lobby were torn out to accommodate retail establishments. Work being done now includes framing for the lobby and putting in a platform for wheelchair viewing. Future work includes restoring the floor and balcony seating, building a staircase to the balcony and renovating the stage.

O’Toole said that an open house and fundraiser at the Liberty Theatre will be conducted in December. The date and time will be announced later.

VAPE

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are not specifically linked by health officials to the more than 1,000 sicknesses and 18 deaths, two of them in Oregon. The governor’s office instead took one prevention option presented by the Oregon Health Authority — ban the sale of all vaping products — and whittled it down to just flavored items because other states have done that and because it might limit teen usage.

Teens are vaping — a lot.

Gov. Kate Brown’s executive action cites a 10% rise in reported e-cigarette youth in Oregon 11th-graders between 2017 and 2019.

“By keeping potentially unsafe products off of store shelves and out of the hands of Oregon’s children and youth, we prevent exposing more people to potentially dangerous chemical compounds, and help lessen the chance of further tragedy,” Brown said in a news release.

That release said the “best available evidence from state and federal public health experts” indicates ingredients in flavored vaping products and additives have been found in cases of vaping-related lung injury and death. A spokesman for the governor in an email said the plan also was informed by advice from the Oregon Health Authority about what policies would be best for overall public health.

More information

OREGON REPORTS 1 MORE VAPING-RELATED ILLNESS

Health officials say one more Oregonian has a vaping-related severe lung illness, raising Oregon’s toll to nine victims, two of whom have died. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says at least 1,080 people across the country have been struck with lung illnesses connected to vaping and at least 18 have died. Officials do not know what is causing the illness. Medical tests have pointed to oils lodged in victims’ lungs, while others have pointed to lung reactions typical of exposure to toxic chemicals. Of Oregon’s nine victims, at least five used products they bought at legal marijuana retail stores.

SCHOOL DISTRICTS SUE JUUL

Schools across the country are grappling with an epidemic of vaping among their students, with adolescents concealing vapes in their sweatshirt sleeves, sneaking puffs in school bathrooms and selling vapes — illegal for minors — in the hallways of high schools. Now, four school districts are suing the e-cigarette company Juul, saying it targeted teenagers in marketing and spurred the epidemic that has sapped schools and educators of time and resources as they reckon with how to help students hooked on the popular product. “We’re tired of companies that just want to make money at children’s expense,” said Whitney Meissner, superintendent of La Conner School District north of Seattle, which filed suit Monday. The lawsuits from Olathe Public Schools in Kansas, Three Village Central School District in New York, Francis Howell School District in Missouri and La Conner come as officials struggle to contain an outbreak of mysterious illnesses and deaths linked to vaping — although most cases involved patients who vaped THC, the active ingredient in marijuana. Juul did not respond to a request for comment on the lawsuits, but in the past it has defended its products by saying they were designed to help adult smokers quit. The company also has shut down social media accounts and stopped sales of flavored products to retail outlets in an effort to curb teens’ use.

—EO Media Group reports

STEELE

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the work the organization has been doing to restore fish populations and improve their habitat.

“Fish are important culturally, economically and recreationally,” Steele said.

Steele acknowledged that in order to meet its goals, GRMW faces a number of challenges, and as executive director he is committed to solving any problems in a way that works for the residents of Union and Wal-lowa counties. For instance, the fact that many of the habitats the program would like to access are on private property means working with landowners and farmers to make sure things go smoothly and work for both parties.

Steele applied for the position when the previous executive director, Jeff Oveson,



Sabrina Thompson / The Observer

Jesse Steele’s position as the new executive director was announced at Tuesday’s annual planning meeting for the Grande Ronde Watershed Program. Steele previously worked as project coordinator and field biologist.

announced his retirement. Shadowing Oveson, Steele had the chance to learn from his experience and was able to take on some of the responsibilities before he

“I am most excited to work with our current staff in this position.”

— Jesse Steele, new executive director of Grande Ronde Model Watershed

“I am most excited to work with our current staff in this position,” Steele said.

Steele lives in La Grande with his wife and their two children and is the youth pastor at Calvary Chapel in La Grande.

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COVE

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another Cove resident in favor of the ordinance.

“I fully support it. It is definitely worth a try,” he said.

Franks said that it could help tourism by making Cove part of a network of towns ATV riders could ride through “seamlessly.”

Franks said he has not heard anyone in Cove say they are opposed to the ordinance.

“Everyone I’ve spoken to has said they are all for it,” he said.

Everyone riding an ATV will be required to adhere to state laws. This means that all drivers operating ATVs will have to be 16 years or older and hold a valid driver’s license. It also means that everyone under 18 years of age will be required to wear a helmet while driving or as a passenger on an ATV. These are just a portion of the rules the ATV ordinance will require riders to follow.

A written copy of the ATV ordinance is available at Cove City Hall for the public to read.

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