



ELGIN

FBLA holding blood drive

■ Success of first drive spurs chapter to hold another

By Sabrina Thompson
The Observer

Elgin High School's gym saw groups of people looking to donate blood on Wednesday. The second blood drive put on by the school's Future Business Leaders of America chapter was a success as 31 people came to donate.

"Last year we were looking into what we should do as our community service project and when we were deciding on what to focus on, we saw an ad about the need for blood around the world," sophomore Shelby Sannar, the drive's organizer, said.

The Elgin FBLA chapter connected with the American Red Cross and local businesses to coordinate the drive. American Red Cross has a traveling team that helps organizations host drives at their facilities. This is what FBLA did, allowing more students and administrators to participate in the drive, rather than having to travel to an American Red Cross center.

According to the American Red Cross, one person's donation can save up to three lives, and approximately 36,000 units of red blood cells are needed every day in the U.S.

"I liked the idea of helping people," senior Kenneth Terry said about donating. "Plus I get to leave class for a little while."

Librarian Assistant Cynthia Chandler said she frequently donates blood because she understands how important it is. When Chandler was a freshman in high school, she said, she had a head injury and required blood transfusions and after having children she realized she wanted to do whatever she could to help someone else's children.

"As long as they take my

See **Drive** / Page 5A

La Grande

Dedicoted postal carrier calls it a career



Dick Mason/The Observer

Letter carrier Tom Colton delivers mail Tuesday to one of the homes on his north La Grande route. Colton has 720 addresses on a route he started making deliveries on in 2004. He said he delivers many more packages and fewer letters today than when he started. Colton has been bitten three times by dogs while making deliveries, none of which caused a serious injury.

By Dick Mason • The Observer

The number of days letter carrier Tom Colton has called in sick are like envelopes with postmarks from long abandoned ghost towns — they are limited.

Colton estimates he has missed work because of illness an average of once a year during his postal career.



Dick Mason/The Observer

Tom Colton will retire today after completing his mail route one last time. He earlier served in the U.S. Air Force for 26 years.

His dedication has helped him make more than a million deliveries during his career, the final of which he will make this afternoon. He is set to retire today after 15 years as a letter carrier and 41 years as a federal employee.

"He does a great job," said La Grande Postmaster Kelly Carreiro.

Mike Haefer, a window clerk at La Grande's post office, agrees. He said Colton has a remarkable record.

"He never misses a delivery," Haefer said.

This has helped Colton build connections with many of the

See **Colton** / Page 5A

Quiet zone still on hold

By Sabrina Thompson
The Observer

Bright yellow posts prevent cars from going around barriers and signs remind drivers to "LOOK" as they cross railroad tracks, yet train whistles continue to sound at all hours as La Grande waits for the Quiet Zone to take effect.

Before the safety measures were installed, trains were required by law to blow their whistles at each crossing. Citizens and businesses spurred the city to implement a Quiet Zone in La Grande to still the whistles, and after a lengthy process changes were made to make a quieter La Grande possible. The safety devices were installed at five intersections: Cherry Street, Fir Street, Willow Street, East H Avenue and Greenwood Street.

Construction at the crossings was completed at the end of July, but the whistles continue to sound because of a problem with the positioning of the flashing lights at Cherry Street.

According to La Grande City Manager Robert Strope, one of the lights at Cherry Street needs to be turned so it is more visible to pedestrians. He said the work must be completed by Union Pacific Railroad.

"Our understanding is that we are submitting a work order, but we do not have a specific date for construction," Strope said.

Union Pacific Railroad's senior director of corporate communications and media relations, Kristen South, confirmed that a work order has been submitted and that the next step will be a pre-inspection to ensure all safety requirements and measures have been taken. Until then the whistles will continue to blow at each intersection as the zone has not been made official.

The construction of the Quiet Zone is a collaboration between the city of La Grande, UPR, Oregon Department of Transportation and the Federal Railroad Administration.

Northwest rail buffs signal for return of Amtrak

■ Saturday meeting to discuss topic to be held at Cook Memorial Library

By Tom Banse
Northwest News Service

As scenic train rides go, it would be a plum ticket. Pacific Northwest passenger rail buffs are gathering in La Grande Saturday to drum up support to bring back part of a long ago canceled Amtrak route, the Pioneer.

The old Amtrak route started in Seattle, went south to Portland, then east through the Columbia River Gorge to Boise, and then to Salt Lake City, with an onward connection to Chicago.

A volunteer-led nonprofit called the Association of Oregon Rail and Transit Advocates (AORTA) proposes to revive at least the Portland to Boise segment. Association president Jon Nuxoll said the Eastern Oregon Rail Summit his group is hosting this Saturday will

kick off what is sure to be a long-term project.

"We think the need is there more than it has ever been. There is just one bus now a day between Portland and Boise," Nuxoll said in an interview. "We think that it is important to have another option for winter driving, for students, for people needing to get to Boise or Portland for health care. We've heard that from an awful lot of people."

The Amtrak Pioneer route through eastern Oregon and

southern Idaho was a money-loser for many years before it was cancelled in 1997. Nuxoll guessed the revived segment would require a state subsidy to operate.

Amtrak was still formulating a comment about whether it would be open to a revival of the line as of our deadline.

Amtrak's current long-distance lines across the American West, including the Empire Builder from Chicago to Seattle/Portland, are

See **Amtrak** / Page 5A

INDEX

Classified.....3B Lottery.....2A Spiritual Life..6A
Comics.....7B Obituaries.....3A Sports7A
Crossword.....5B Opinion.....4A Sudoku7B
Dear Abby8B Outdoors1B Weather8B
Horoscope.....5B Record3A

WEATHER

Full forecast on the back of B section

**Friday**
35 LOW
A shower late

**Saturday**
46/24
A few showers

**Sunday**
45/20
Sunny, but chilly

CONTACT US

541-963-3161
Issue 127
2 sections, 16 pages
La Grande, Oregon

Email story ideas to news@lagrandeobserver.com.
More contact info on Page 4A.

