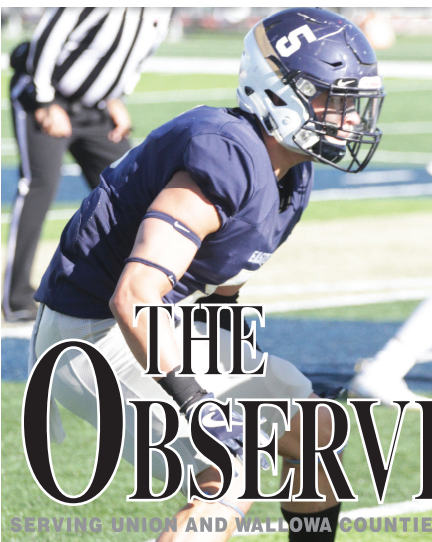




# Barreto will not run in 2020

By Phil Wright and Dick Mason  
EO Media Group

PENDLETON — Republican state Rep. Greg Barreto of Cove is not seeking re-election in 2020. He said the time has come to turn his attention toward family and his growing manufacturing business.



Barreto

“It has been an honor and privilege to be elected and to serve as the state representative for Oregon House District 58,” he said in a news release. “The past six years have been an adventure and time of learning. I have enjoyed helping my constituents, passing legislation that is for the good of all Oregonians, and working for the great people of HD58. Thank you for this opportunity to serve and for the strong support I have received from so many.”

Barreto, during a phone conversation, said he is a firm believer in a citizen legislature, and the role of lawmaker should not become a profession. After three terms, he said, it was time for someone else to step up and serve the people of House District 58.

The district consists of Union and Wallowa counties and a portion of Umatilla County. Barreto won his first term in 2014 after defeating current Pendleton Mayor John Turner in the Republican Primary and Democratic nominee Heidi Van Schoonhoven in the general election. Barreto was unopposed in 2016, and in 2018 he defeated Skye Farnam, an independent, in the general election.

Barreto is the founder of Barreto Manufacturing Inc. in Cove, and serving in the Legislature required easing away from the business. He said his children and employees asked him to come back and run the company.

See **Barreto** / Page 5A



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GAMEDAY

# Finish strong

# Weekend

Inside  
**Local teachers earn Apple Awards, 2A**  
**EOU men, women reaches CCC finals, 7A**

Good day to our valued subscriber Cindy Beck of Island City



Sabrina Thompson/The Observer

Members of the Lego Robotics Club at Central work on the various missions their robots will complete. Shown from left are Gabriel Arias (4th grade), Damen Hibbert (4th grade), Ian Garlitz (5th grade) and Jaydin Webb (4th grade).

# Learning with Legos

By Sabrina Thompson  
The Observer

Fifth-grader Fern McConnell adjusted the Lego pieces that would hold wheels onto a tiny computer. She fiddled with the construction of the bricks, working on the build and model of her team's robot. The team's aim: to create a robot that will win.

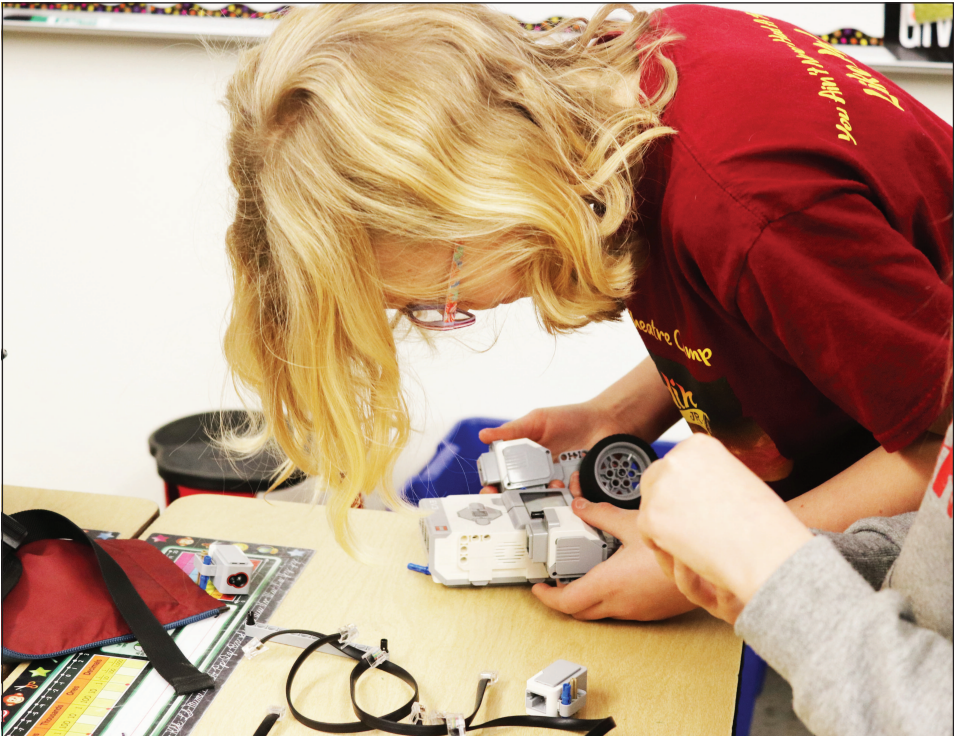
At Central Elementary School in La Grande, the Lego Robotics Club, made up of fourth- and fifth-graders, is one of many teams in the area getting ready to compete in a Dec. 4 tournament at Eastern Oregon University.

“I joined because I thought it would be fun and I would get a chance to learn how to make robots and code,” fourth-grader Jonathan Gisi said.

Fourth-grade teacher Leslie Graham oversees the club, which meets twice a week to build and program robots that will complete various tasks as part of a competition. The students work in teams to build a robot from a computer unit called an EV 3 and create their devices from there using Legos.

The statewide program is the creation of the Oregon Robotics Tournament Outreach Program with levels of competition from kindergarten through 12th grade. Central focuses on the First Lego League, for fourth to eighth grades. Schools in Elgin, Imbler, Hermiston and Ontario are among those in the area that have teams.

Seven years ago Graham started an after-school engineering program at Central, and from there she learned about the robotic tournament. Contributions from Grande Ronde Children's Center, La Grande School District and Wild-



Sabrina Thompson/The Observer

Fifth-grader Fern McConnell works on building her team's robot during an after-school meeting of the Central Lego Robotics Club.

horse Foundation helped pay for the club's registration fees and materials.

“I love science. I wasn't able to get any science classes when I was growing up until I got into high school,” Graham said, explaining that she started the club with the goal of getting students interested in science at an early age.

ORTOP has a different theme every year for its annual competition. This year's theme is “City Shapers,” so students will create a robot that can go down various paths to complete tasks that might occur when building in a city, such as stacking blocks on top of each other, pushing levers and hanging rings. The theme also asked for teams to look within their own city for issues they can solve using robotics and technology and then to present their ideas to an outside source.

“They need to show proficiency in robotics. They get points for how many tasks

their robot completes,” Graham said about the competition.

The team from Central found a problem with accessibility within La Grande, particularly on Second Street from H Street to Washington Avenue, and gathered data about the lack of curb cuts on the street. According to their findings, 84% of the curbs on that stretch of Second Street have no curb cuts, making it difficult for those with mobility issues to move between the curb and the street.

“Our ideas were focused on solving the issue of no curb cuts,” fifth-grader Lucille Morris said.

The students presented their project to the La Grande City Council during its November meeting. Gisi told the council a scissor lift could bring people from street to curb and vice versa. And McConnell suggested a ramp that could come out when people need it and retract when cars pass.

With the project

completed, the team changed focus to preparing for the competition. Once the students finish constructing their robots, they will program them to complete tasks using coding software.

The Lego league provides teams with materials for the competition, including blueprints for models of robots. However, students are allowed to create their own models using the materials as long as they follow certain parameters in height and width.

Graham saw the program as a way to get students interested and involved in engineering at a young age, which she said is important to helping them develop.

“First, it teaches problem solving,” Graham said. “It shows them how to collaborate with others, be part of a team, that it is okay to piggyback off of other people's ideas, and (it teaches them) resilience and persistence.”

# Lawsuit to block B2H line filed

By Jayson Jacoby  
EO Media Group

Two La Grande groups filed a lawsuit in federal court seeking to block the proposed Boardman-to-Hemingway power transmission line, which would run through Baker and Union counties.

The Stop B2H Coalition and Greater Hells Canyon Council filed the suit Tuesday in U.S. District Court in Pendleton.

The plaintiffs contend the Bureau of Land Management and U.S. Forest Service, which have authorized the proposed 293-mile, 500-kilovolt transmission line, failed to adequately review the potential environmental and other effects of the power line that Idaho Power Company wants to build.

The B2H project is undergoing a multi-year review through the Oregon Department of Energy. Idaho Power, which is partnering with PacifiCorp and the Bonneville Power Administration, hopes to start building the line in 2023.

Jim Kreider of La Grande, See **Lawsuit** / Page 5A

# Church building puts up 'for sale' sign

By Dick Mason  
The Observer

The outlook for the 114-year-old Union United Methodist Church building is taking a turn for the worse.

The Oregon-Idaho Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church, which oversees all Methodist churches in Oregon and Southern Idaho, has put the Union United Methodist Church building complex up for sale.

“It is truly the end of an era,” said LaVon Hall of Union, a member of a committee that has been overseeing the operation of the Methodist Church complex.

The Union United Methodist Church disbanded in June due to declining

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## WEATHER

Full forecast on the back of B section



**Friday**  
36 LOW  
Partly cloudy



**Saturday**  
54/36  
Mostly sunny



**Sunday**  
59/38  
Partial sunshine

## CONTACT US

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Issue 136  
3 sections, 20 pages  
La Grande, Oregon

Email story ideas to [news@lagrandeobserver.com](mailto:news@lagrandeobserver.com).  
More contact info on Page 4A.

MONDAY

WHAT'S NEXT FOR DISTRICT 58?

Online at [lagrandeobserver.com](http://lagrandeobserver.com)

