



Submitted photo

Boy Scout James Thurman stands on a footbridge he built at Morgan Lake.

New footbridges at Morgan Lake, thanks to Boy Scout

By Dick Mason
The Observer

LA GRANDE — Walking and biking near the shore of the north end of Morgan Lake will be much easier when conditions are marshy thanks to the efforts of James Thurman, a La Grande Boy Scout.

Thurman built two 30-foot footbridges at the northeast end of the lake for his Eagle project. The bridges replaced two similar footbridges that were in poor condition. They were starting to “fall apart and rot,” Thurman wrote in a statement about his Eagle project.

Thurman stated it is important to have the two new footbridges at the site because in the spring conditions get marshy there, making it difficult for bikers and pedestrians to traverse through the area. He got the idea for the project after talking with Stu Spence, the director of the city of La Grande’s parks department.

The Boy Scout said he began the project by designing the footbridges with his father, Greg Thurman. Next, he removed the existing

footbridges and installed concrete supports for the new ones.

“This was definitely the most difficult part of the project, as the ground was extremely tough and rocky,” the scout said.

Thurman hauled lumber to the site and cut it into desired lengths and constructed the footbridges with the help of 30 fellow Scouts, friends and community members.

Beeck Farms, the Beeck family and the La Grande Parks and Recreation Department donated funds to help with the build. Thurman also said his father and Spence played key roles in completing the footbridges.

Thurman said he owes a lot to Boy Scouts. “Although I have nearly completed my time with the Scouting program, I will never stop being a Scout,” he wrote. “Throughout my seven years of involvement, I have received important life skills, (met) great friends and influential mentors and (made) countless memories that I will carry with me the rest of my life.”

Spreading the warmth

By Dick Mason
The Observer

LA GRANDE — More than 350 Union County families are in a better position to weather the frigid conditions now hitting the Grande Ronde Valley thanks to the La Grande Lions Club and Soroptimist International of La Grande.

The two teamed up again to do what they do best — help those who need a boost.

The La Grande Lions Club provided coats to families and Soroptimist International provided gloves, boots, hats and socks at the Riveria Activity Center over two weekends as part of their combined “Coats and Boots for Kids” program.

The coats were provided by the La Grande Lions Club’s annual Coats for Kids program, which has been operating in Union County for more than 30 years. The coats are purchased with money from Lions Club fundraising activities and donated funds. Local businesses are among those who contribute to the Lions Club Coats for Kids effort.

Individual donors who made a big impact this year include one anonymous individual who purchased several hundred dollars worth of new coats and donated them to Coats for Kids, said Linda Gleeson, a member of the La Grande Lions Club.

In addition, collection boxes are placed in local schools where parents can recycle coats they no longer need. The recycled coats are given to Betty Sprenger of La Grande, who does cleaning and mending. Sprenger has done this volunteer work for years.



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La Grande Lions Club members Larry Glaze, left, and Tanner Willson, show off some of the items provided to families via the club’s Coats for Kids program. The Lions Club works in conjunction with Soroptimist International of La Grande to provide clothing to help families get through the winter.

“She does an amazing job. She works for hours and hours,” said La Grande Lions Club member Tim Gleeson.

Soroptimist International of La Grande purchases its clothing items with funds raised from club activities such as the annual Festival of Trees, funds from donations and with the help of local businesses that provide gloves, boots, hats and socks at a discount. Di Lyn Larsen-Hill, a member of Soroptimist International of La Grande, said it is very fulfilling to see the looks on the faces of those leaving the Riveria Activity Center with new winter clothing.

“It is so wonderful to see the smiles of children walking out with new pairs of boots (and other items). They look so proud,” Larsen-Hill said.

Agencies that assist the

Coats and Boots for Kids program each year include the Department of Human Services, which sends out postcards to more than 2,600 families throughout Union County who could benefit from the giveaways, notifying them of the event. DHS also provides the postage for these postcards, and the InterMountain ESD does the printing free of charge. Community Connection of Northeast Oregon provides the facility to house the distribution events.

For information about making donations to the La Grande Lions Club’s Coats for Kids program, write to the club at P.O. Box 1320, La Grande 97850. Information for making donations to Soroptimist International of La Grande can be obtained by writing the Soroptimists at P.O. Box 3202, La Grande 97850.



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