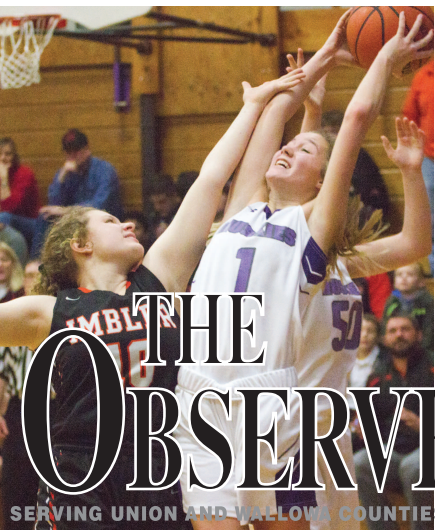




THE
OBSERVER

SERVING UNION AND WALLOWA COUNTIES SINCE 1896

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Sports

Reaching new heights

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Weekend

Union County

4 school districts beat state grad rate

■ Imbler, North Power hit 100%, Elgin lowest at 75%

By Sabrina Thompson
The Observer

LA GRANDE — Four school districts in Union County achieved perfect or near-perfect graduation rates for the 2018-19 school year. The Oregon Department of Education announced Thursday the state's 80% graduation rate for the school year was the highest ever. All but two of the six schools in Union County beat the statewide average, with Imbler and North Powder at 100%.

"I think it is so exciting to be at 100%," Imbler district superintendent Angie Lakey-Campbell said. "I think it is because of the culture and the expectation that everyone will graduate every year."

Lahey-Campbell said the freshman on-track program the district implemented last year along with smaller class sizes contributed to the successful graduation rate. She said one of the four pillars for the district is commitment, and there is a commitment from students, parents and teachers to get students to graduation.

For the last five years Imbler has maintained an above average graduation rate, dropping to 96% in 2016-17 but regaining its standing the following year.

The La Grande School District just missed the average with a rate of 79.87%, a drop of about 6.6% from the 2017-18 school year.

"Anytime you decline it is disappointing," superintendent George Mendoza said. "Anytime you put in an effort for student success and it doesn't work out, it can be disappointing."

Mendoza said part of the lower rate of graduation for 2018-19 was due to students choosing alternative paths to completion, such as online school, completing the GED or needing an extra year to complete their senior year.

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Union County

A SALUTE TO THE UNSUNG NEWS CARRIERS

■ The Observer's 16 carriers continue tradition established during newspaper's early days



TOP PHOTO: Observer carrier Clifford Dayley handles a stack of newspapers Monday in La Grande as he loads up for deliveries. His brother, Lonnie Dayley, also is a carrier for the paper, and their father was before them. **BOTTOM PHOTO:** Observer newspaper carrier Bruce Lohan checks copies of Monday's edition in La Grande before he begins deliveries. The Observer starting Feb. 4 will use the United States Postal Service to deliver its newspapers.

By Dick Mason
The Observer

LA GRANDE — Darold Dayley, circulation manager of The Observer from 1973-97, was not a magician, but he had a process for keeping creases out of the newspapers he delivered that could confound onlookers.

Still, Dayley, who died in 2010 at age 74, is best remembered not for manual dexterity but his one-of-a-kind reassuring personable manner and a contagious enthusiasm for making sure The Observer's subscribers received their papers quickly and in near-perfect condition.

"He would always tell people they would get their papers no matter what, and he meant it," said his son Lonnie Dayley, a longtime Observer carrier.

The Observer's 16 carriers today continue to embrace the mantra. "They are amazing, they care so

much," said Kelli Craft, The Observer's regional circulation director.

Carriers such as Chester Smith embody that spirit. Smith delivers 270 papers each Monday, Wednes-

day and Friday. The Observer's days of publication. After picking up his papers, Smith spends 60-90 minutes placing them in plastic bags to protect them from the elements. He said this is critical to keep papers dry in the winter, noting even those placed in Observer boxes with weather flaps still can get wet if not enclosed in plastic.

Smith strives to make it easy for his customers to pick up their copies of the newspaper with as little effort as possible. For example, one customer on his route is a woman with mobility issues who has a difficult time walking to the end of her driveway to her Observer box, so Smith gets out of his vehicle and places her

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Staff photo by Ronald Bond

Leana Vanderbilt loads Monday's copies of The Observer into her vehicle in La Grande as she gets ready to deliver the papers.

Wallowa County

Moraine deal to protect land

■ Purchase keeps Wallowa Lake's East Moraine from development

By Cassandra Profta
Oregon Public Broadcasting

JOSEPH — Almost 1,800 acres of Wallowa Lake's East Moraine forest and open space now are safe from development.

For more than 10 years the Wallowa Lake Moraines Partnership a consortium composed of the county, Wallowa Land Trust, Wallowa Resources and Oregon Parks and Recreation Department worked to purchase 1,791 acres to eliminate any risk of home development, especially on the moraine's vulnerable crest.

This week, the group announced it finally raised the \$6.5 million needed to buy the glacier-formed rocky hill known as a moraine.

"This has been an important priority for the people of Wallowa County," said Commissioner Susan Roberts. "Keeping the moraine as a natural and working landscape was something that everyone agreed on. We are doing this for everyone in the county."

At the property sale closing at Wallowa Title, there was an air of solemnity rather than celebration as county commissioners along with representatives from the nonprofits Wallowa Resources and the Wallowa Land Trust all signed the sale documents. They discovered the \$1,350,382.79 check to seal the deal was precisely \$5 short. Someone opened their wallet and placed a \$5 bill on the table.

The Ronald C. Yanke Family Trust owned the land and had considered a proposal to develop the property with three houses and a conference center. Now Wallowa County owns the land, and extinguished all development and sub-division rights,

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Oregon Public Records

Council rejects attempt to limit independence

By Sam Stites
Oregon Capital Bureau

SALEM — The state's Public Records Advisory Council on Wednesday rejected an attempt to restrict its independence. At the same time, the 13-member council said it would fight attempts to block it from proposing public records legislation.

During its meeting in Salem, the council showed its support for Legislative Concept 166, which establish-

es the council's authority to propose legislation and makes the public records advocate an independent member of the council. The concept is expected to become Senate Bill 1506 in the 35-day legislative session that begins Feb. 3.

Scott Winkels, a member of the council and a lobbyist for the League of Oregon Cities, proposed measure amendments to strike language dealing with the advo-

cate's voting power. He also wanted the group to drop its plans to seek public records legislation.

Instead, the council voted to approve the bill as it was proposed. Members also authorized Chair Stephanie Clark and acting Public Records Advocate Todd Albert to proposed legislation. Winkels was the lone no vote.

In addition, the council decided to advertise beginning March 9 for

a new public records advocate. The council expects to review applicants and hire someone in April.

During Wednesday's debate, two members of the council — Les Zaitz, editor and publisher of The Malheur Enterprise and chief of the Oregon Capital Bureau, and Steve Suo, The Oregonian's investigations editor — raised concerns that amendments proposed by Winkels' organization put the council in an awkward position.

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WEATHER

Full forecast on the back of B section



Friday
35 LOW
Mostly cloudy



Saturday
44/38
Cloudy



Sunday
45/35
Spotty showers

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La Grande, Oregon

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Call The Observer newsroom at 541-963-3161 or send an email to news@lagrandeobserver.com. More contact info on Page 4A.

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