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Good day to our valued subscriber **Cindy Foster of La Grande**

Oregon House District 58

Nelson files for House seat

■ Union County businessman seeks to succeed Greg Barreto

By **Dick Mason**
The Observer

LA GRANDE — Mike Nelson of Elgin has filed to run for the Oregon House District 58 seat.

Nelson, a Republican and Union County businessman, is the fourth candidate to file for the position. All are seeking to succeed Rep. Greg Barreto, R-Cove, who announced late last year he would not run for re-election. Barreto is completing his sixth year as the House District 58 representative.

Nelson has lived in Union County for the past five years after moving here from California. He said the political climate in California has become too liberal for his liking, and the state's business taxes are getting too high.

"California used to be a good place to live and raise children," he said. "As I see it, Oregon is about 10 years behind California, and if we don't act now, it will be another California."

Nelson said he has a juris doctorate from University of Northern California LP School of Law and an associate of arts degree from Sierra College in Rocklin, California, and he attended the police academy at San Joaquin Delta College and the California State University of Sacramento.

Nelson works in the timber industry as a transportation specialist. He said he has seen the decline in mill activity and is bothered that natural resources are not perceived to be as important as they once were. He laments Oregon is restricting access to natural resources, which the region's economy needs.

Nelson said he is a supporter of Timber Unity,

See **Nelson** / Page 5A

Oregon Legislature

GOP walks out on session

■ Oregon House Republicans join Senate boycott over cap-and-trade bill

By **Claire Withycombe**
Oregon Capital Bureau

SALEM — A day after their counterparts in the Senate vacated the Oregon Capitol, Republican representatives brought the House to a halt Tuesday, skipping a daily session in protest of a controversial climate bill.

Their absence blocked the House from taking votes. If all

Inside

The climate change bill should be discarded and lawmakers on both sides of the aisle should convene to work out some type of compromise that includes voter participation. **Page 4A**

Democrats are present, the House still needs at least two Republicans to act on bills.

A spokesperson for the House

Republicans, Tayleranne Gillespie, said she didn't know how long their boycott would last and

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Barreto



Smith

Eastern Oregon Head Start



Staff photo by Dick Mason

Eastern Oregon Head Start teacher Jamey Olsen adjusts a helmet for student Afzal Abdullah during recess Wednesday morning in La Grande.

Finding funding

■ Additional funding would allow Head Start to serve more children locally

By **Dick Mason, The Observer**

LA GRANDE — Eastern Oregon Head Start may make a historic jump during the leap year.

Eastern Oregon Head Start is preparing to apply for a \$1.2 million grant from the state's Preschool Promise program. The funds would allow the local Head Start to boost the number of children it serves in Union County by about 60% starting this fall.

The increase would be one of the highest since EO Head Start began five decades ago, said director Robert Kleng.

Eastern Oregon Head Start serves 80 children at its La Grande center, 17 at its Elgin center, 20 at its Union center and 60 in Baker City. Should Head Start receive the Preschool Promise grant, Kleng said, these numbers would rise by 40 in La Grande and about 17 in Elgin, 20 in Union and 40 in Baker City.

The addition of 40 slots in La Grande also depends on a big helping hand from the La Grande School District, Kleng said. The school district has offered to renovate two modular units and provide those for Head Start to use as additional classrooms. The modulars are on K Avenue at the site of the old Central Elementary School, which the district tore down about four years ago.

"This is huge," he said. "We would have the operational funding (with the grant) but not the space without help from the La Grande School District."

EO Head Start also is working with the Elgin, Union

and Baker school districts to obtain additional space to accommodate more students.

The Preschool Promise grant comes from the Student Success Act, which the Legislature passed in 2019. When fully implemented, the Student Success Act is expected to invest \$2 billion in Oregon education every two years. The education act's revenue come from the tax on gross receipts for businesses with at least \$1 million in sales.

Kleng said the additional funding would allow Eastern Oregon Head Start to serve a greater range of children in terms of their families' socioeconomic status. Presently, only children from families at or below certain income levels can receive services from EO Head Start in La Grande. However, the Preschool Promise would mean all children would be eligible to attend Head Start classes, for which there is no charge.

"Family income would no longer be a barrier," Kleng said.

He added that "research shows repeatedly" that children benefit when they are in classrooms of students

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Blue Mountain Humane Association

Animal shelter moving forward

■ Blue Mountain Humane Association has new director, board

By **Sabrina Thompson**
The Observer

LA GRANDE — The Blue Mountain Humane Association in La Grande is reorganizing after the director and several other members of the board resigned.

The nonprofit's animal shelter has a new manager, Erin Davis, and its board has a new president, Beverly Beach. And the organization is working to reestablish its governing body.

"We want to present a clean and organized shelter to the public," Beach said.

Beyond that, Davis, Beach and the other eight people serving on the board for the Blue Mountain Humane Association would not discuss the changes or other matters about the organization.

The local humane association has had a contentious board for the last several years, according to meeting minutes that date back to 2016. Some of the issues came from the shelter's prior director, John Brinlee, who lived at the shelter, and the matter of his salary.

Minutes from April 2019 reveal the board discussed paying Brinlee \$32,000, which included the amount spent on providing room and board at the shelter. The option of being paid at an hourly rate of \$12 for 30 hours a week would have meant Brinlee no longer could live at the shelter.

"The salary was never meant to be one designed as a sole source of income for the director, and that's just the way it has to be, because the Board cannot afford to pay what the director thinks he's worth," the minutes stated.

Finances were another issue. In the span of three years the board went through three treasurers. Former treasurer Rae Trachel, who joined the board in 2018, said it was difficult to organize the books and balance the budget during the time she was there.

"The board was asking for a balance of where we spent money," Trachel said. "It was frustrating. There weren't receipts or statements showing where money was used, or when they did come in, they were old. They never came in when they needed to be in."

Brinlee was the only

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WEATHER

Full forecast on the back of B section



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52/31
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