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Good day to our valued subscriber Scott Wilburn of Cove

State Wrestling

Inside
Boosted by four individual championships, three second-place performances and several important wins throughout the lineup, La Grande won its first state wrestling crown since 1996. **Page 7A**

Another state title drought halted

By Ronald Bond
The Observer

PORTLAND — Verl Miller guided the La Grande wrestling team to state championships in 1978 and 1996.

He watched from the stands Saturday at the Memorial Coliseum in Portland as the Tigers claimed the program's third wrestling title and ended a 24-year drought.

"It's been a great time," Miller said. "The kids wrestled well. What a dedicated group of coaches and wrestlers. It makes me very proud of them, the kind of people that they are."

Miller spoke over and over about the work ethic of the La Grande squad and said that also was a feature of the teams he coached to state championships.

"They have high goals set for themselves, and they're not afraid to work hard," he said.

Miller also spoke highly of how the team handled the pressure of being a state-title favorite and coming in as the top-ranked team in the 4A coaches poll.

"They really did. There was no throwing head gear, no pouting. (They were) dedicated as a group. It carried right on from football into wrestling," he said.

On Saturday, the Tigers had four individual champions and key performances throughout the lineup. Head coach Klei Carson pointed to each performance that netted the Tigers points as crucial to the title.

"It takes a whole team to win a championship," he said. "We've been talking about it all year long. It's not (just) See **State** / Page 5A

Public Health

Coronavirus hits Eastern Oregon

■ Umatilla County resident tests presumptive positive for coronavirus; no cases yet in Union County

By Antonio Sierra
EO Media Group

WESTON — The coronavirus has arrived in Eastern Oregon.

The Oregon Health Authority announced Monday it had a third presumptive case of coronavirus. This

time the diagnosis is in Umatilla County. Union County remains free of the coronavirus. Carrie Brogoitti, public health administrator for the Center for Human Development Inc., said local health officials, schools and emergencies services

have been preparing for weeks to deal with the virus.

Preliminary reports indicate the Umatilla County resident attended a youth basketball game in the gymnasium at Weston Middle School, 205 E. Wallace St., in Weston, on Saturday. The person is hospitalized in Walla Walla, the health authority said.

Athena-Weston School District

officials closed the gym and are deep cleaning out of an abundance of caution. The gym is not attached to the rest of the school. Health officials do not consider the separate school building to pose any risk of exposure.

OHA is investigating the case to see how many other people came into close contact with the victim.

See **Virus** / Page 5A

Umatilla River Flooding

Local donations aim to help save LIVESTOCK

■ More than 370 tons of hay have been provided to help animals in Umatilla County

By Dick Mason, The Observer

LA GRANDE — The severe flooding that struck Umatilla County almost a month ago did more than leave many homeowners with devastating home and property damage. It also destroyed hay and pastureland, putting thousands of horses, cattle, sheep and goats at risk of starving.

Fortunately, none of this livestock has been lost to famine and people such as the husband-and-wife team of Ryan and Amanda Tsiatsos of La Grande are doing their best to keep this from happening.

The couple is among close to 50 livestock owners in this region who are donating hay to help livestock in Umatilla County and the southern edge of southeast Washington. The Tsiatsos family on Sunday donated 111 bales of hay to Emergency Equipment Solutions. The Burns-based nonprofit, a public safety disaster preparedness and relief organization, is leading an effort to get as much hay as possible to farmers and ranchers in Umatilla County in need of assistance.

The hay the La Grande couple donated weighed about four tons and was worth between \$600-\$800.

"We had some extra hay and we could either sell it or give it away," Ryan Tsiatsos said. "We See **Donation** / Page 5A



Staff photo by Dick Mason

Doug Stratton, foreground, and Ryan Tsiatsos, center, load hay Sunday afternoon to help Umatilla County livestock owners who lost pastureland and hay during heavy February flooding. Mick O'Dai, who also loaded hay, is in the background.



Staff photo by Dick Mason

Valerie O'Dai loads hay Sunday to help livestock in flood-affected areas of Umatilla County. O'Dai is the senior disaster relief coordinator with Emergency Equipment Solutions, a Burns-based nonprofit that provides disaster preparedness and relief.

Wallowa County

Project nears finish line

By Bill Bradshaw
Wallowa County Chieftain

ENTERPRISE — A \$4 million-plus irrigation pipeline is nearly complete that will give irrigators in the Upper Wallowa Valley a more efficient and less expensive way to water crops, livestock and pasture when the tap is opened May 1.

The pipeline will replace long-time irrigation ditches that can lose 25% of the water through seepage into the ground, according to Bud Brashler, whose Lightning B Ranch will benefit from the pipeline.

Jesse Miller, who has farmed 1,150 acres in the area for the past 20 years, spearheaded the privately owned project with the help of several government agencies and, of course, all the landowners involved.

The North Prairie Creek Pipeline serves the northern end of the Wallowa Lake Irrigation District with Wallowa Lake water diverted from Farmers Ditch and into twin 27-inch pipelines that can be accessed at various points by 17 landowners in the area.

The pipeline will water about 2,050 acres of hay, small grains and pasture land. "It operates under 100% gravity pressure," Miller said. "It's taking close to 600 hp of electrical pumping energy off the grid. This is definitely a 'green' project."

Miller, who masterminded the project, said the project took 10 years to complete. He got advice and financing from the irrigation district, the National Resources Conservation Service, the Oregon Water Enhancement Board, the Oregon Energy Trust and the landowners who will benefit.

He emphasized that while the pipeline will have flow meters, they won't be to restrict usage, just to monitor it so everyone gets their share of water. He said users will be limited to their share so their neighbors aren't shorted.

"It's amazing how much water we won't have to use," given the end of leakage from irrigation ditches, Miller said.

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Tonight
37 LOW
Mostly cloudy

Wednesday
50/31
Dull and dreary

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THURSDAY

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