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Good day to our valued subscriber Ron Titus of Union

Westminster Kennel Club Dog Show

Local breeder fulfills dream

■ Donna Locke's dog wins merit award at Westminster show

By Sabrina Thompson and Phil Wright
The Observer

UNION — Donna Locke of Union readied Feb. 9 to watch the 144th Westminster Kennel Club Dog Show, the most prestigious dog show in the nation.

After all, she bred Jack and his litter mate Teller, 5-year-old Belgian Tervurens who took the stage in New York City to compete in the annual event.

"It's been a dream of mine since I was an 8-year-old showing in 4-H to have my dog able to go and show," she said.

Since returning to Union County three-and-a-half years ago, Locke has not been able to show dogs as much as she would like. However, a good friend from Colorado, Andrea Wojciechowski, has helped Locke with showcasing her dogs there.

"Jack and Teller had a very successful late summer and fall show season," Locke said, "and they earned the recognition to compete at the Westminster show."

Locke was eager to see Jack and Teller in action from her home and signed up for a free trial to watch the show live. The trial, however, lasted a mere hour.

"About 45 minutes before the dogs were on the show, I ran out of time," she said.

And her internet was down due to flooding in early February, so she scrambled to find a way to see the show and her dogs, and found success on her smartphone.

"I saw it in real time," Locke said. "That was pretty neat."

Locke grew up in La Grande and has enjoyed working with animals since she was a child in 4-H. That

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Public Health

Health authorities, schools taking NECESSARY PRECAUTIONS



EO Media Group file photo

La Grande's Grande Ronde Hospital reports it is working with local agencies to prepare for a possible influx of patients due to the new coronavirus.

By Sabrina Thompson and Dick Mason, The Observer

LA GRANDE — Health authorities have not reported any cases of the novel coronavirus in Union County, but local organizations are preparing for COVID-19. The Center for Human Development in La Grande has been lending its guidance and assistance across the county, working with schools, health care providers and the public to keep people informed about the lower respiratory illness.

"We are an agency serving as the local public health department in Union County," said Carrie Brogoitti, the public health administrator for the center. "We are helping with identifying the disease and preventing the spread, in addition to providing information to the community."

COVID-19 is one of many reportable diseases, which means if someone seeks medical attention from a health care provider, it would be reported to the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The call lets the CHD help the provider determine if the illness is COVID-19 based on clinical presentation.

"If it was in fact the virus, we would then help guide treatment," Brogoitti said.

Grande Ronde Hospital, La Grande, in an announcement on its website stated while this is relatively new virus, the hospital has been preparing for public health issues, medical emergencies and disasters year-round.



Brogoitti



Dixon

"We take preparedness seriously 365 days a year," the hospital reported.

The hospital and its clinics "treat patients with a variety of infectious diseases on a daily basis," according to the statement. "These patients are isolated and treated in appropriate spaces by our trained staff using specialized equipment."

Grande Ronde also reported it is working with local agencies to ensure it is prepared for a possible influx of patients due to COVID-19.

The North Powder School District closed its facilities Wednesday for a "deep cleaning" of facilities in response to the virus.

"This decision is out of an abundance of caution for the health of our students and staff," Superintendent Lance Dixon stated in an announcement. "There are no confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Union County and no

See **Virus** / Page 5A

Public Safety

Harvey stepping down in May

■ La Grande police chief has served city since 2009

By Sabrina Thompson
The Observer

LA GRANDE — Brian Harvey said he always wanted to help people, and that was why he joined law enforcement.

His career started in Montana in 1983, and after 34 years serving as a full-time law enforcement officer — 11 as chief of the La Grande Police Department — Harvey is retiring. His last day will be May 4 as the department prepares to transition to new leadership.

"Our community is blessed with the talent and the competency of the La Grande Police Department," Harvey said. "They are amazing folks and they care deeply about this community. We have a wonderful community and it has been a real privilege to serve this community."

When Harvey began his career, he worked as a volunteer cadet for a sheriff's office in Montana. Over the next three decades he worked his way up the ranks until taking the position of chief in La Grande. Harvey joined La Grande's police force in 2009 after working as a lieutenant in Baker City.

"I wanted to have a job that stood for something bigger than myself," Harvey said.

When Harvey decided to accept the chief role, he said he did it because he felt like he could make a difference. When he joined La Grande police, Harvey said he saw the department moving toward a culture of unity rather than working as separate units under the same roof.

"It is a culture of high performance," Harvey said. "Rather than sticking to status quo, or thinking good enough is good enough, we are always striving to be better."

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Oregon Empowers Guatemala

OTEC journeyman lineman bound for Guatemala

■ Tom Higgins to help bring electricity to remote village

By Dick Mason
The Observer

LA GRANDE — Tom Higgins of La Grande soon will climb steep hills in Guatemala so people living in an impoverished village can feel like

they are on top of the world.

Higgins is a journeyman lineman for Oregon Trail Electric Cooperative and participating in a project to bring electricity to the remote Guatemalan village of Aldea Montanita de la Virgen. The village is in the district of Jalapa, a mountainous region in the southeastern part of Guatemala.

A 17-year OTEC employee, Higgins

will leave in early April for Guatemala, where he will work for two weeks. He can't wait.

"I am really pumped that I will be able to give a hand," Higgins said. "I like helping people out."

The National Rural Electric Cooperative Association's philanthropic arm, NRECA International, is coordinating the electrification project, called Oregon Empowers

Guatemala. Higgins will be part of a 15-member team of volunteers, all from rural electric cooperatives in Oregon. Two other OTEC employees also are jumping into the effort — Charlie Tracy of Baker City and Curtis Eggleston of Burns. Tracy is Oregon Trail Electric's director of engineering, and Eggleston is a line crew foreman.

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Issue 28
3 sections, 24 pages
La Grande, Oregon

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