EFFECTS

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delaying the release of their blockbusters. The latest James Bond movie, "No Time to Die," was to hit theaters April 10. Now it will open in November. Disney's live-action version of "Mulan" was coming out March 27. The studio yanked that and has not announced a new release date. The "Fast and Furious 9" was going to roar into theaters May 22. The new date is April 2, 2021.

Granada manager Patty Johnson already has a list going of movies that have pushed back their openings. She said the recent weekend business "was pretty good," but admissions seemed to drop off during the week. Whether that was due to the movies or people concerned with the coronavirus, she said, was a guessing game.

For the next couple of weeks, she said, the Granada is fine. But after that, and as the list of movie delays grows, the business may need to make adjustments. She said she plans on talking to the theater's owners about what steps to take.

There have been some first-run movies the Granada didn't show, she said, so maybe the business' booker could get those. But cutting back on showings could be a possibility. And theaters in some places have cut admissions in half to bring more people in. All of that means less revenue.

"It's gonna hurt," she said.

Pacific Power, which provides electricity to Wallowa County and much of Umatilla County, announced it will temporarily suspend disconnections and late fees for non-payment for customers in Oregon, Washington and California to support the state of emergency in all three states in response to the COVID-19 virus. The company also stated it will continue to evaluate other ways to support customers "for the duration of this quickly evolving public health emergency."

Oregon Trail Electric Cooperative, which sends juice to Union and Baker county residents, reported is has not taken those steps but is committed to working with it customers.

"We are closely monitoring the local and regional developments of this pandemic and the impact to our region and membership," according to a written statement from Eric Wirfs, the cooperative's director of member services. "The safety of our member-owners, employees and the general public is our top priority. Various ways to support our member-owners are being evaluated as this health emergency develops."

The Union County Jail also is taking steps against the novel coronavirus. Sheriff Boyd Rasmussen said staff are cleaning the facility much more often to ensure proper sanitation protocol. He also said there is a push to get low-level offenders in front of a judge and out of the jail to keep the population lower to avoid the potential for COVID-19 spreading among inmates.

The Observer also asked its Facebook followers how the coronavirus affected them. Several replied they had to cancel trips, including a parent who won't get to see her daughter graduate from Air Force basic training in San Antonio. Another local canceled her study abroad trip to Costa Rica. One man said: "Cancelled dinner with my parents yesterday. Cancelled soccer games and practices. Cancelled birthday parties. Cancelled happy hour meet-ups with friends."

— Observer reporter Sabrina Thompson contributed to this report.

Staff photo by Phil Wright

Toilet paper is in short supply in La Grande as customers stock up in the wake of a possible COVID-19 outbreak.

CORONAVIRUS FORCES CANCELLATIONS

Following Gov. Kate Brown's prohibition on crowds larger than 250 people due to the COVID-19 outbreak, local governments and organizations have cancelled events. The Observer will update this list.

UNION COUNTY

The Union County Senior Center, 1504 N. Albany, La Grande, will suspend serving meals on site as of Monday and suspend all senior activities until further notice. Meals will be available for pickup between 11 a.m. and 2:30 p.m. on weekdays. Meal delivery may be arranged by calling 541-963-7532 before 10 a.m.

Grande Ronde Hospital & Clinics postponed its annual free Community Blood Screening events. The hospital planned the screenings for April. The hospital foundation canceled its annual gala for Saturday night.

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints suspended all its public gatherings until further notice.

LA GRANDE

Eastern Oregon University canceled the following: "Medea" performances — Friday through Sunday; Shamrock Shoot — Saturday; U.S. Sen. Wyden Town Hall — Saturday; Writer's Workshop — Saturday; SAIF Corporation — Tuesday; Kids Night Out — Saturday; Oregon Migrant Leadership Institute — Saturday; Best of the NW Wrestling Tournament — Sunday, March 29; For updated closures at EOU, go to https://www.eou.edu/coronavirus/event-cancellations-and-schedule-changes/.

The La Grande School District canceled the following: All student field trips the next four weeks with the potential to reschedule and all school sponsored large gatherings for parents and community.

Professional development events outside the district.

La Grande Parks and Recreations Department canceled the following: youth basketball, and adult basketball, women's volleyball (games and tournament); Doggie Easter Egg Hunt; Mariners game excursion; Tri-Cities Americans hockey excursion.

Cook Memorial Library will be open only for holds pickup, checkout/return of items and quick browsing. Prolonged use of the library such as lounging, studying or using computers is prohibited. And the library has canceled all meetings and programs through April 12.

Union County Master Gardener program suspended classes until further notice.

Grande Ronde Hospital Auxiliary will not meet Monday.

Tai Chi

Presbyterian Friendship Center canceled Wednesday night community dinners as of March 18 and will resume in the fall and Tai Chi until March 31.

The La Grande United Methodist Church suspended all in-person activities through the end of March.

St. Peter's Episcopal Church and Zion Lutheran Church canceled all services and church-sponsored activities.

The Small Business Development Center canceled Resource Wednesdays at Ignite and is planning to begin again in May.

UNION

Union School District canceled all nonessential events and activities, including spring sports practices and tournaments.

VFW Post 4060 suspend bingo until April 1.

IMBLER

Imbler schools canceled the annual sports awards banquet and the weekend girls basketball tournament.

ISLAND CITY

Island City Elementary School canceled its after-school boys basketball games for the rest of the season.

ELGIN

The Elgin Stampeders canceled its annual gun show for the weekend of April 4.

La Grande schools boss gets high praise

By Dick Mason
The Observer

LA GRANDE — Superintendent George Mendoza received a two thumbs-up review Wednesday night from the La Grande School Board.

Mendoza

"You continue to meet and exceed our expectations of a superintendent," said board chairman Merle Comfort in a letter he read at the meeting.

Comfort continued that Mendoza fared well in an assessment, which focused on professional standards and three district goals. School district personnel and community members helped with the evaluation.

The board evaluation showed Mendoza was "effective or accomplished" in all performance standards with an average of 3.55 on a 4.0 scale. It also showed that Mendoza succeeded in reaching all three of the district goals he was evaluated on.

The board's evaluation letter also lauded Mendoza on the work he has done in putting together a five-year strategic plan for the school district. Comfort wrote Mendoza's work on helping develop the plan is putting the school district in a position to best use funding from the Student Success Act, which school districts receive starting this year. The Legislature in 2019 passed the act, which provides school districts with additional funding to boost graduation rates and student achievement.

Comfort said the board unanimously decided to offer Mendoza a new three-year contract, which will be negotiated later.

Mendoza is completing his third year as La Grande's superintendent. He came to La Grande from the Morrow County School District where he was an assistant superintendent. He is a 1997 graduate of Eastern Oregon University and a member of its board of trustees.

GRANT

Continued from Page 1A

grade piano," Durfee said.

He said it will have a big impact on boosting the sound quality of music performed in the auditorium.

Middle school and high school band teacher Chris Leavitt said all six band classes in the school district will receive $1,000 for new music curriculum. He said the music the school district has is about 30 years old and tastes have changed a lot in the past three decades.

Leavitt said today's music often is better suited for helping students to learn faster, and that can move students closer to becoming lifelong musicians.

"When students learn faster the buy-in is greater," Leavitt said.

The school district's band programs will receive about $20,000 for new instruments, which Leavitt said will be welcome because many of middle school and high school band instruments are nearing the end of their shelf life.

On the art front, the additional fine arts money will cover the cost of additional ceramic and painting supplies plus 10 new art room tables at La Grande Middle School, and a kiln, two pottery wheels and a clay mixer at La Grande High School. The school district's elementary schools also will benefit, with each receiving $2,000 for additional art supplies.

A $14,000 String and Orchestral Arts Revitalization project grant from the Oregon Community Foundation also will help with the cost of musical equipment. The Grande Ronde Symphony Association applied for the grant for the school district. Carpenter credits Alice Trindle of the symphony association with playing a key role in obtaining the grant.

"I'm extremely grateful to the Tiger Booster Club."

Kevin Durfee, the choir teacher at the middle school and high school

SHERIFF

Continued from Page 1A

endorsement for Bowen did not. McKaig said some members, including Bowen, abstained from voting, but he refused to reveal the total of the vote.

Bowen credited the association for standing tall.

"I admire the bravery of the union members to vote and share their opinion," he said.

Rasmussen said he believes his record for hiring and running the department will speak for itself in the electorate. He said he will continue to focus on the safety of the community.

"After all, it is about the citizens feeling protected with a fair and equitable law enforcement system in place," Rasmussen said, "not me securing an internal endorsement."

He also stated being sheriff takes a thick skin.

"When you arrest the bad guys, operate a $4 million budget with efficiency and have to make tough decisions, you end up upsetting some people," according to a written statement from Rasmussen. "A Deputy sent me a letter endorsing me unequivocally and unanimously by all Deputies and signs it 'trustfully yours.' And then, shortly thereafter, he filed to run against me."

Rasmussen said he is confident in his chances for reelection and it is up to the community to vote on who they think is best.

"It believe I will win," Rasmussen said, "but it is going to be a tough fight."

QUILTS

Continued from 1A

holds monthly meetings at Island City's city hall. The meetings feature a show-and-tell of members' projects and a program of some kind, including talks given by guest quilters. The group also holds classes for those who would like to learn more about the art of quilting.

The quilts the group makes go to a variety of charities, including retirement homes, dialysis centers and newborn babies. Members quilt blankets, wall hangings and clothing. Some go on display. Besides the library's show, which will be up until May 19, the Quilt Questers have a large exhibit at the Union County Fair every summer.

"I think people enjoy seeing the quilts and appreciate the artistry," Lamb said. "They like to see people are still quilting. Plus in the library the fabric absorbs the sound. And it is good for those who have made it to see their works on display too."

There are very few people who are part of the group under the age of 40. Lamb explained this is because quilting takes time and those who are younger need to focus on other things, such as work and family.

However, Lamb said, it is never too early to start collecting fabric.

Quilters are tactile sorts who enjoy the feel and look of various fabrics. She said quilting is two hobbies in one.

"One hobby is doing the actual sewing and making the quilts," Lamb said. "The other is shopping for the fabric."

A large portion of the fabric the group uses is donated or thrifted. Lamb said when a member passes away, it is common for their fabric to be passed on to the group. In this way, the fellow quilter remains a part of the community. Some even donate whole quilts, which Lamb said she loves.

"I am in love with old quilts," she said, "and I just love their stories."

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