



Plut settling in at EOU

in Sports

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SERVING UNION AND WALLOWA COUNTIES SINCE 1896

THE OBSERVER

Weekend Edition

SATURDAY-MONDAY • March 28, 2020 • \$1.50 Good day to our valued subscriber Patti Williams of La Grande

EO Media lays off 47 in virus fallout

The Observer

SALEM — EO Media Group, the parent company of The Observer, Baker City Herald and 11 other newspapers across Oregon, announced on Wednesday it is laying off 47 employees.

The cuts are the result of the loss of advertising revenue due to the coronavirus outbreak. The company spread the layoffs across the newspaper chain. They include two jobs at The Observer and an employee shared with regional newspapers. Overall, the company is reducing its workforce 18%.

“It’s been an extraordinary few weeks as the COVID-19 pandemic has taken over our daily lives and business operations,” said Bend Bulletin Publisher and EOMG Chief Operating Officer Heidi Wright on Wednesday. “The revenue losses due to the closing of commercial businesses to prevent the spread of the virus has created a ripple effect across the nation, forcing layoffs in many industries.

“As you can imagine, the revenue pullback across the company has been dramatic, with many businesses closing their doors and events being canceled throughout the region. Many of the big box stores have canceled their advertising until further notice. We are taking action now in order to stabilize our operations and keep our staff intact as much as possible during this time of crisis.

“We believe that this is the best course, but do not take this action lightly. While this is painful, it could be short-lived if, by some miracle, the economy bounces back after the coronavirus runs its course and we see local retailers reopen and begin advertising again,” Wright said. “But there are no promises. This economic downturn could be with us for a long time.”

The Observer was founded in 1896 and serves Union and Wallowa counties.

Ramping up for COVID-19

■ Local officials address concerns about supplies

By Sabrina Thompson
The Observer

LA GRANDE — The Oregon National Guard delivered 150 military cots along with blankets and hygiene packs Friday morning to Grande Ronde Hospital. Local public and health officials Wednesday explained the delivery is part of being ready for an increase in COVID-19 cases.

The National Guard reported its delivery came at the request of Union County Emergency Management to support the ongoing medical response to the coronavirus outbreak.

“We are all part of one team working together to ensure the safety of our communities throughout Oregon,” said Stephen Bomar, director of public affairs for the Oregon Military Department.

Union County has one positive test for the coronavirus, but nearby Umatilla County reported is now has four, while the statewide total Friday afternoon was 414, including 12 who have died, according to the Oregon Military Department.

A crew of four Oregon Army National Guardsmen in Salem on Wednesday assembled the military cots, blankets and hygiene packs, then loaded the items for the ride to La Grande.

In addition to deliv-



Contributed photo by Sgt. 1st Class Zachary Holden

Oregon Army National Guard Sgt. Luke Fox prepares 150 military cots along with 150 blankets and hygiene packs Wednesday in Salem for delivery to La Grande. Union County Emergency Management requested the supplies in response to the COVID-19 crisis.

ering the supplies, the team planned to support a Grant County request to assist in setting up temporary structures at the Blue Mountain Hospital in John Day for short-term medical stations. Grant County has no confirmed cases of the virus.

Grande Ronde Hos-

pital CEO and President Jeremy Davis, Dr. Susan Rice, Center for Human Development Public Health Administrator Carrie Brogetti and County Commissioner Matt Scarfo gathered remotely on a video conference Wednesday to discuss what the crisis looks like on the local

scene and how their organizations are preparing for an increase in the number of COVID-19 cases in Union County.

Davis said the hospital has implemented a number of protective steps to combat the spread of

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BY THE NUMBERS

Worldwide cases: 512,701
Worldwide deaths: 24,495
U.S. cases: 85,356
U.S. deaths: 1,246
Oregon cases: 414
Oregon deaths: 12
Union County cases: 1
Union County deaths: 0
Wallowa County cases: 0
Wallowa County deaths: 0
*As of 3 p.m. Friday, March 27

Sources: World Health Organization, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Oregon Military Department

FAQ

(from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)

THERE IS A CASE IN MY COMMUNITY. WHAT SHOULD I DO?

During an outbreak, stay calm and put your preparedness plan to work. Follow the steps below:

- Stay home if you are sick. Keep away from people who are sick. Limit close contact with others as much as possible (about 6 feet).
- Stay informed about the local COVID-19 situation, including temporary school dismissals in your area.
- Continue practicing everyday preventive actions. Cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue and wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use a hand sanitizer that contains 60% alcohol. Clean frequently touched surfaces and objects daily using a regular household detergent and water.
- Notify your workplace as soon as possible if your regular work schedule changes. Ask to work from home

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Arts Center East could become another virus victim

■ Gov. Kate Brown directs Oregon Cultural Trust to find relief funds for nonprofits

By Sabrina Thompson
The Observer

LA GRANDE — The COVID-19 crisis has Art Center East in La Grande facing a grim reality.

Sarah West, community outreach coordinator for the center, announced the nonprofit has furloughed all part-time staff, cut the executive director’s hours in half and canceled nonessential business, all in the wake of the coronavirus outbreak forcing myriad closures throughout Union County

and the state.

“Art Center East will be able to pay its bills through April 5,” West said in a news release. “After that date, remaining staff will be furloughed, utilities cut off, and insurance cancelled. Shortly after, the Art Center East nonprofit would likely be dissolved, earmarked funds returned to funders, and the building vacated.”

Studios remain open to

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Observer file photo

Snow covers the ground in January at Art Center East in La Grande. The nonprofit and community hub for arts is facing closure due to the coronavirus outbreak.

Trump signs stimulus bill after swift congressional votes

■ Bill includes larger unemployment benefits, deferrals of student loans

By Andrew Taylor, Alan Fram, Laurie Kellman and Darlene Superville
The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump signed an unprecedented \$2.2 trillion economic rescue package into law Friday, after swift and near-unanimous action by

Congress to support businesses, rush resources to overburdened health care providers and help struggling families during the deepening coronavirus epidemic.

Acting with unity and resolve unseen since the 9/11 attacks, Washington moved urgently to stem an

economic free fall caused by widespread restrictions meant to slow the spread of the virus that have shuttered schools, closed businesses and brought American life in many places to a virtual standstill.

“This will deliver urgently needed relief,” Trump said as he signed the bill in the Oval Office, flanked only by Republican lawmakers. He thanked members of both parties for

putting Americans “first.”

Earlier Friday, the House gave near-unanimous approval by voice vote after an impassioned session conducted along the social distancing guidelines imposed by the crisis. Many lawmakers sped to Washington to participate — their numbers swollen after a maverick Republican signaled he’d try to force a roll call vote — though dozens of others remained safely in

their home districts.

The Senate passed the bill unanimously late Wednesday, 96-0.

“Today we’ve all acknowledged our nation faces an economic and health emergency of historic proportions,” said House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif. She said Americans deserve a full-on government

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WEATHER

Full forecast on the back of B section



Tonight

38 LOW

A shower or two



Sunday

51/33

A morning shower

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La Grande, Oregon

Email story ideas to news@lagrandeobserver.com.
More contact info on Page 4A.



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TUESDAY

HOW LA GRANDE COPED IN 1918

Online at lagrandeobserver.com