What is lacrosse?

In Sports, 7A

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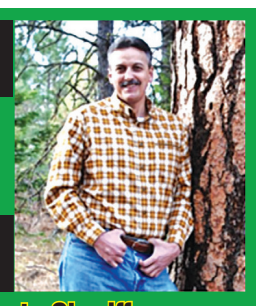

Look me up on Facebook: Bill Miller For Union County Sheriff
Email me: billmillerforucsheriff@gmail.com
Paid for by Committee to elect Bill Miller, Sheriff. Jared Rogers - Treasurer, 73001 Palmer Junction Rd., Elgin, OR 978827

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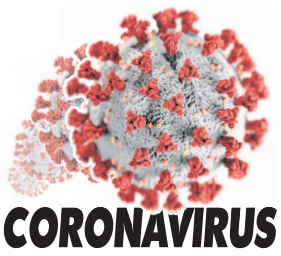
Good day to our valued subscriber Brian Kelly of La Grande



CORONAVIRUS Outbreak updates

Observer staff

These are the latest significant local and regional developments of the coronavirus outbreak. Look for more comprehensive coverage of these and other COVID-19 stories on our website, www.lagrandeobserver.com, and in subsequent issues of The Observer.

LA GRANDE

•Audiology & Hearing Aid Associates opened a hotline (541-612-7555) for local patients and hearing aid wearers who require any help, advice or support. The business at 1404 Fourth St. closed its waiting room to the public to help slow the spread of COVID-19. The business also installed a drop box for hearing aids requiring cleaning or maintenance.

For more information, contact Erika Shakespeare at erika@lagrandehearing.org or 541-605-9345.

•Grande Ronde Hospital created a video to answer some of the frequent questions it has been receiving: www.youtube.com/watch?v=j801VAwaE0Y.

La Grande Evening Observer

VOLUME XVIII — SIX PAGES — LA GRANDE, OREGON, THURSDAY, DECEMBER 26, 1918

Notice to the Public

"I hereby issue a positive order in the name of the City Board of Health, demanding that all places of business in La Grande be closed from December 26, 1918 to the morning of January 4th, 1919, excepting hotels, restaurants, rooming houses, laundries, garages, newspapers, banks, creameries, drug stores to sell necessities to the sick only, grocery stores and meat markets to transact their business by telephone only. People who have no business at railroad depot must not visit it."

A. L. RICHARDSON, Chairman City Board of Health

CLOSING ORDERS NOW APPLY TO GENERAL LINES OF BUSINESS

WARM WELCOME FOR WILSON

BUSINESS PEOPLE LOYAL

FLEET HOME FROM EUROPE

HEALTH OFFICER EXPLAINS QUARANTINE MEASURE

Staff photo by Phil Wright

The Observer's front page of Dec. 26, 1918, reports the order of A.L. Richardson, the chairman of La Grande's health board, closing down most businesses during the deadly influenza pandemic.

Pandemics: Then and now

Outbreak of Spanish flu closed La Grande in the winter of 1918-19

By Dick Mason
The Observer

LA GRANDE — The COVID-19 pandemic has many people looking into the rear-view mirror, back to when a more deadly virus had people talking about quarantines and face masks.

The influenza pandemic of 1918-20 claimed the lives of perhaps 50 million worldwide, and its fury did not bypass Oregon. The pandemic's victims included 48,146 Oregon residents who contracted it, 3,675 of whom died from it, according to reports from the old Oregon State Board of Health at Oregonhistoryproject.org.

Oregon had about 750,000 people then, which means about one in 15 Oregonians contracted the flu and 7% of those died from it.

The media of the day dubbed the disease the Spanish Flu, a misnomer because the outbreak did not originate in Spain. As multiple science and history sources recount, the virulent strain of influenza was rampant during World War I in Germany, Britain, France and the United States, but wartime censorship in those countries downplayed the contagion and how deadly it was. "Spanish Flu" caught on after news reports emerged from Spain in 1918 about an epidemic in Madrid.

An examination of The Observer's archives does not reveal how many lives the virus claimed in Union County, but the havoc it wreaked was well-documented. The worst period La Grande experienced extended from December 1918 through January 1919.

So bad was the situation that La Grande's city council, acting on directives of A.L. Richardson,

See, **Flu**/*Page 5A*

By the numbers

Worldwide cases: 693,224
Worldwide deaths: 33,106
U.S. cases: 140,904
U.S. deaths: 2,405
Oregon cases: 606
Oregon deaths: 16
Union County cases: 1
Union County deaths: 0
Wallowa County cases: 0
Wallowa County deaths: 0
**As of 12 p.m. Monday, March 30*
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

See, **Numbers**/*Page 5A*

Barreto Manufacturing lays off 85 employees

Virus fallout has demand for products dropping

By Dick Mason
The Observer

LA GRANDE — The economic downturn due to COVID-19 is hitting a major Union County employer hard.

Barreto Manufacturing Inc. of La Grande has reduced its staff by about about two-thirds since mid-March when government steps to curb the spread of the new coronavirus sent the economy spinning.

"In the past two weeks we have laid off 85 employees," said Greg Barreto, the president and CEO of Barreto Manufacturing.

The firm had 120 to 130 employees before it started reducing staff, a task Barreto describes as extremely painful.

"Laying people off is the hardest thing a business owner ever has to do," said Barreto, who also is completing his sixth and final year as representative of Oregon House District 58.

Barreto said his company's layoffs were necessary after his business dropped dramatically.

"Our orders virtually shut down," he said.

His company has historically received many orders over the phone in the spring but those have not come in this month.

"Things are pretty dead," Barreto said. "We are at a standstill right now."

Barreto said he had to make comparable layoffs during the recession of 2008-09 and his staff was back to its previous level three to four years later. Barreto said he is hoping after the COVID-19 crisis his company rebounds in less time.

"I'm hoping the economy will come back faster," he said, explaining this could be the case because the downturn occurred so quickly.

A fast recovery would boost people's faith in the economy, he noted, adding, "What drives the economy is confidence."

He said he understands why there is so much concern now, a reason why consumers are hesitant to make purchases.

"When there is a level of uncertainty it is natural to pull back," Barreto said.

Barreto Manufacturing

See, **Layoffs**/*Page 5A*

Staff photo by Dick Mason

Barreto Manufacturing Inc. of La Grande has laid off 85 employees — about two-thirds of its workforce — since mid-March due to the economic downturn stemming from steps to stop the spread of the new coronavirus.

EOU moves to online classes through June

Students question quality of distance education

By Sabrina Thompson
The Observer

LA GRANDE — Eastern Oregon University is going fully digital for the remainder of the school year.

For nearly half of the EOU student population this won't be much of a change. Those students already are enrolled in distance learning. But for those students for whom in-class interaction is a staple of the educational experience, there will be some adjusting.

"We wanted to give our students certainty," said Tim Seydel, EOU's vice president of university advancement.

"We all have been living in an uncertain time as guidance has evolved daily from public health experts about the best way to contain the transmission of COVID-19. Our decision came down to two factors: how to deliver continuity in education and how to protect the health of our students, faculty and staff," he continued. "With those two goals and EOU's expertise in distance learning, we decided that, for the spring term, moving to this platform was in the best interest of our students, faculty and staff."

The cost of education

Tuition and fees for on-campus undergraduate learning ranges from $23,000-$36,000 per year, depending on whether the student comes from out of state. The cost of online classes is dependent on the number of units a student takes — on average, a 12-unit quarter costs around $3,000 for undergraduate coursework and $5,000 for graduate classes. However, according to Seydel, there will not be a change in tuition. This means students who were on campus can expect to still pay $8,000-$12,000 for the quarter despite moving the platform for learning.

Molecular biology major Megan Bolton said she is frustrated with the lack of refunds to students. The sophomore takes a mixture of online and on-campus

See, **EOU**/*Page 5A*

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WEATHER Full forecast on the back of B section

Tonight: 28 LOW, Late flurries
Wednesday: 42/25, Snow showers

CONTACT US

541-963-3161

Issue 39
2 sections, 16 pages
La Grande, Oregon

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

THURSDAY SHERIFF'S NEW COMPUTERS

Online at lagrandeobserver.com