# Cove School District to build offices in old cafeteria

## District uses new dining hall to fix meals for students, seniors while school closed

**By Dick Mason**
The Observer

COVE — Construction of the Cove School District's $1.8 million dining hall is complete, but more building work is on the campus' horizon.

The next construction in the school district will involve the remodeling of the district's old cafeteria in its elementary school, which the dining hall is replacing. The old cafeteria will be converted into space for a nursing station, a counseling office and a conference room.

Superintendent Earl Pettit told the Cove School Board on Tuesday that the remodeling may start this summer and he hopes it can be finished by Christmas. He said some of the work could be done while school is in session.

"We could get it done without being too disruptive," Pettit said.

The Student Success Act, which the Legislature passed in 2019, is funding the work.

The new dining hall remains closed because of COVID-19 restrictions, but district staff are using it to cook breakfasts and lunches for students and senior citizens each weekday during the closure of Oregon's public schools.

Pettit said on Tuesday morning breakfasts and lunches were provided to 93 students and 106 adults. Most of the adults are seniors older than 60. The meals are being delivered, but students also have the option of picking them up each weekday.

School board member Steve McLean lauded the school district's efforts.

"This is an incredible community benefit during a difficult time," he said.

The federal government will reimburse the school district for the meals to students. But Pettit said how much the district will receive for the meals it is providing to older residents is unclear. The school board voted unanimously Tuesday to continue having the district provide senior meals during the closure.

If the feds don't cover the senior meals, Pettit said he will not be upset because it is critical to reach out to the community.

Staff photo by Dick Mason

The Cove School District is using its new dining hall to prepare meals for students and seniors. Here, Tanner Collins cleans the windows of the new building in mid-March.

The cost of providing senior citizen meals is not high, he said, adding most of the cost involves personnel expenses and not food. He said because school district staff is already at work preparing meals for students, having them cook for seniors costs the school district relatively little.

"We would have (food service workers) here regardless," Pettit said.

The school district's new dining hall, which is spacious and has improved kitchen equipment, is making it much easier for the district to prepare meals for students and seniors.

"We would not have been able to do this without the new dining hall," Pettit said.

The school board also voted on Tuesday to change the grading system for students during the closure while classes will be available via a distance education program. Students completing a class for credit will be awarded letter grades of A, B or C or a pass. No Ds, Fs or fails will be given.

Pettit said this system will reward students who do well in these trying circumstances and not hurt those who do not.

"It will hold students harmless, not punish them," Pettit said.

# National forests close developed recreation sites

Observer staff

JOHN DAY, PENDLETON, and BAKER CITY — The U.S. Forest Service announced the Malheur, Umatilla, and Wallowa-Whitman national forests are temporarily closing all developed recreation sites, to align with direction from state governors to stay home, stay safe, and save lives during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

The closure applies to campgrounds, trailhead facilities, picnic areas, rental cabins, Sno-Parks and boat ramps across the forests' shared footprint in Oregon, Washington and Idaho. Forest roads, trails and general forest lands remain open to the public, but all visitors should practice social distancing.

The three national forests in the Blue Mountains are jointly taking these measures to encourage compliance with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention guidance on social distancing to slow the spread of COVID-19. The governors of Oregon, Washington and Idaho have called for residents to stay home and avoid any unnecessary travel or gatherings.

Additionally, according to the announcement, these closures will reduce potential pressure on emergency services in rural communities. Those who become lost, injured or otherwise in need of assistance while recreating in the forest may strain search and rescue resources at a time when there are no resources to spare. Closing developed recreation sites will also aid in conserving the limited supply of personal protective equipment that is needed for critical medical care.

While the closures affect people looking to enjoy the outdoors during these challenging times, according to the Forest Service, protecting community health and safety is the first priority. This action will significantly reduce coronavirus exposure risks to forest visitors, employees, volunteers, and contractors.

While developed recreation sites are closed, the national forests remain open, and commercial and private activities, such as timber harvest, grazing and dispersed recreation, may continue.

National forests also will refund all reservations for forest recreation facilities during the temporary closure. the public also cannot access forest offices; however, customer service is available by phone or e-mail.

# Eastern Oregon gets COVID-19 support

## Union, Wallowa, Baker counties receive funding

**By Sabrina Thompson**
The Observer

LA GRANDE — Union, Wallowa, Baker and Umatilla counties and the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation received funding from the Oregon Health Authority to help local public health departments in the fight against the spread of COVID-19. The funding is part of a $4 million effort to assist at the local level.

Union County received $58,006 and handed that to La Grande's Center for Human Development, which serves as the county's public health agency. Baker County received $33,071, which will go toward maintaining staff focused on COVID-19.

Baker County Health Department Administrator Nancy Staten said there is a lot of work being done within the community, which wouldn't be possible without the staff to support it.

Wallowa County received $32,461, Umatilla County received $113,923, and the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation's Yellowhawk Tribal Health Center received $40,500.

# Obituaries

### *Virginia M. (Dunn) Bechtel*
Formerly of Elgin • 1929-2020

Virginia Mavis Bechtel, 90, of Pasco, Washington, and formerly of Elgin, died March 30 at her residence. A celebration of her life will be held at a later time.

Virginia was born Dec. 20, 1929, in John Day, to James "Pat" and Marie (Grubb) Dunn. She resided in Priest River, Idaho; John Day, La Grande and Elgin; and Connell and Pasco, Washington. Virginia attended school in Priest River and graduated from Elgin High School. She married Floyd Dale Bechtel on Dec. 24, 1947.

Virginia was a loving mother and wife. She enjoyed oil painting, china painting, sewing, playing the piano, gardening and baking. She was a member of the Connell Garden Club.

Surviving relatives include her children and their spouses, Marlena and Arie Bechtel-Rysdam of Elgin, Dala Bechtel of Elgin and Rhonda and Paul Murray of Pasco, Washington; sister and brother-in-law, Julianne and Dale Clark of Elgin; five grandchildren and six great-grandchildren; and 14 nieces and nephews.

She was preceded in death by her husband, Floyd; parents, James "Pat" and Marie; brother, Kenneth Dunn; and sister, Patricia Garroutte. Online condolences may be made to the family at www.lovelandfuneralchapel.com.

### *Douglas Spiegel*
La Grande

Douglas Spiegel, 87, of La Grande, died March 31 at a local care facility. Arrangements by Loveland Funeral Chapel & Crematory.

***Upcoming local services***

LOVELAND
FUNERAL CHAPEL AND CREMATORY

**APRIL 3**
**Loren Fihn:**
5 p.m. burial of cremains, Island City Cemetery; followed by reception dinner.

**APRIL 18**
**Linda Johnston:**
1 p.m. celebration of life and potluck, Elgin Community Center.

# EOU awards $700,000 in scholarships

## Award is the university's largest scholarship award

Observer staff

LA GRANDE — Eastern Oregon University Foundation announced its largest ever scholarship award, a $700,000 fund to provide various amounts to more than 200 students during the 2020-21 academic year.

"Scholarships make it possible for hundreds of EOU students to seek and complete their degrees at EOU," Patrick Regan, executive director of philanthropy and the EOU Foundation said in a news release. "For many, it may be the only way for them to afford the education they need to allow them to achieve a fulfilling career and be leaders in their communities."

Funding for foundation scholarships comes from private endowments made by former students and faculty. Some are funded by one-time donations, other donors pay into the fund yearly. For example, James Gorham, an EOU alumnus who graduated in 1995, and his wife, Tracey, established a scholarship within the foundation to help students who want to be physical therapists. And Herb and Linda Jolliff set up an endowed scholarship specifically for students who want to pursue a career teaching math in rural Oregon.

"Both Herb and Linda are from small towns in Oregon," according to Regan. "Herb taught math at Oregon Tech for his career, and he and Linda want to encourage students who have an interest in doing a similar thing. The James and Tracey Gorham Scholarship is for students intending to go into physical therapy. James is a physical therapist in La Grande and wants to support EOU students who will follow him into his chosen profession."

The foundation supports more than 150 scholarships, each with special eligibility requirements determined by the donors. All of the scholarships require an application, which the board of trustees reviews. This application includes information about the student and an essay. Awards range from $500-$6,000.

"Many of the people who contribute to scholarship funds received the same kind of help when they were students," the news release from EOU said.

In addition to scholarships for the next academic year, EOU Foundation has begun offering additional support through the Student Crisis Fund in response to COVID-19. The fund was established to help students who face sudden hardships and is now being offered on a more widespread level to students struggling due to the global pandemic. Information about the fund and scholarships can be found on EOU's website.

# Public Safety Report

**MONDAY**

9:37 a.m. — An Elgin caller on the 800 block of Division Street reported the theft of a vehicle. A Union County sheriff's deputy responded and took a report.

10:55 a.m. — La Grande police received a complaint about abandoned cats on the 400 block of Washington Avenue.

11:39 a.m. — A caller on the 2500 block of Second Street, La Grande, asked to speak to an officer about a purchase of tools that may have been stolen.

12:28 p.m. — Law enforcement received a report of an assault on the 10400 block of South Valley Avenue, Island City. Union County sheriff's deputies responded and took a report.

1:41 p.m. — La Grande police received a complaint about a vehicle continually blocking the fire lane on the 1200 block of Eighth Street.

9:05 p.m. — A caller reported debris caused a road hazard at Spruce Street and X Avenue, La Grande.

**TUESDAY**

5:10 a.m. — La Grande police responded to the 2100 block of Third Street on a report of a fight in progress. Officers arrived, determined there were an argument, separated the people involved and talked to them.

8:08 a.m. — Law enforcement and emergency services responded to Interstate 84 near milepost 258 for a single-vehicle crash. No one was injured.

11:15 a.m. — A La Grande resident on the 2600 block of Third Street complained about an ongoing situation with a stray cat. An animal enforcement officer talked to the caller about options.

11:59 a.m. — La Grande police responded to the 600 block of Grandy Avenue for a residential burglary. Officers took a report.

12:27 p.m. — The Union County Sheriff's Office received a report of counterfeit money on the 11600 block of Island Avenue, Island City. A deputy responded and made a report.

3:55 p.m. — A caller reported someone trying to get into a vehicle on the 700 block of West Serenity Lane, Union. Union County sheriff's deputies responded and arrested Christopher W. Poe, 32, of Baker City, for driving under the influence of intoxicants and first-degree criminal mischief.

4:04 p.m. — A caller on the 1100 block of Willow Street, La Grande, reported the destruction of city property. An officer responded and took down information.

6:15 p.m. — The Union County Sheriff's Office responded to the 700 block of Hartford Street, Elgin, for a domestic disturbance. The circumstances did not warrant an arrest.

6:45 p.m. — A Union resident on the 900 block of North Main Street reported a dog bite. A Union County sheriff's deputy followed up.

Thank You Chamber Members
≈ All Air ≈ HVAC Service
Union County Chamber of Commerce
www.VisitUnionCounty.org
Outstanding Computer Repair
RYDER BROTHERS STATIONERY STORE

www.CountrysideSheds.com
Countryside SHEDS LLC
CCB #149931
Need more Room?
STORAGE BUILDINGS
(541) 663-0246
Locally owned and operated for over 25 years
"More Than Just a Shed"
10505 N. McAlister Road
(Corner of Hwy 82 & N. McAlister Rd.)
RENT to OWN starting at $68 Month

La GRANDE AUTO REPAIR
975-2000
www.lagrandeautorepair.com
MOST ADVANCED TECHNOLOGY AVAILABLE
ACDelcoTSS
Joe Horst

Prepare for unexpected power outages with a Generac home standby generator
SCHEDULE YOUR FREE IN-HOME ASSESSMENT TODAY!
877-557-1912
FREE 7-Year Extended Warranty* A $695 Value!
Offer valid March 16, 2020 - June 30, 2020
Special Financing Available
Subject to Credit Approval
*Terms & Conditions Apply
GENERAC