

True Value faring well in new location

COVID-19 restrictions means some people have extra time for home improvement

By Ronald Bond
EO Media Group

LA GRANDE — One area of business, at least locally, seems to be immune from the effects of the coronavirus.

In fact, the mitigation steps that have forced much of the population to stay home the vast majority of the time has been a boon of sorts for Jefferson True Value.

The La Grande hardware store, previously named Jefferson Street Supply, moved March 30 to its new location at 214 Greenwood St., just down the road from its former home at 1507 Jefferson Ave.

“Right now, considering what we’re going through, our numbers as far as individuals coming in the store are up compared to where we were at the other store,” assistant store manager Jimmy Burgess said. “There’s been a lot of people coming through the front door.”

Burgess, who has been at the business nearly five years, noted that curiosity of the new location is part of what led to an uptick in customers.

But more than that, having extra time at home as a result of COVID-19 has given many the opportunity to work on projects — whether new or long overdue — which has brought customers into the store at an even higher rate than usual.

Burgess said this is true even in his own home.

“I think what is going on right now is that, myself included, if there have been some home projects sitting on the (back) burner, it’s allowed everyone to take advantage of that time to get those done,” he said. “My wife and I did some remodeling (recently). We had planned a vacation and couldn’t go any-



Photo by Ronald Bond/EO Media Group

Jefferson True Value assistant store manager Jimmy Burgess, right, looks up information Wednesday for customer Chris Haefer. The hardware store, formerly known as Jefferson Street Supply, is in its second week at its new location in La Grande.



Photo by Ronald Bond/EO Media Group

James Welley looks through plumbing supplies Wednesday at Jefferson True Value, 214 Greenwood St., La Grande.

where due to COVID-19, and we remodeled our bathroom downstairs. Everyone is taking advantage of being home and the time being presented to them.”

The purchases made have ranged from single items for small fix-ups to larger hauls for

major undertakings.

“I had a couple people coming in looking for a handle for a screen door,” he said. “(We’ve sold) indoor plumbing. We have contractors still coming in able to work and buying stuff to seal up windows they’re installing.

It’s a wide range.”

Burgess pointed to several reasons why the business elected to move into the space that previously housed Golden Harvest and a beauty salon.

“More space and we just collectively thought there was something we needed to do in order to make the business better,” he said. “As soon as we looked and saw an opportunity, we needed to find someone that was going to be able to help us create this move.”

That led to the merger with True Value — an American wholesaler with more than 4,600 independent retail locations worldwide — and, thus, the name change.

“True Value ended up being that buyer we needed to get going,” Burgess said.

The remodel began last summer, and a lot of work went into transforming the building into a hardware store.

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Cleanup plan goes to new owners of big dairy

Easterday Farms Dairy in Boardman would have up to 28,300 cattle

By George Plaven
EO Media Group

BOARDMAN — The Oregon Department of Agriculture has approved transferring the cleanup permit at the former Lost Valley Farm in Boardman, which shut down in early 2019, to new owners Easterday Farms based in Pasco, Washington.

Easterday bought the property for \$66.7 million last year. Lost Valley Farm opened in 2017 and was permitted for up to 30,000 cows, making it the second-largest dairy in Oregon.

However, under previous owner Greg te Velde, Lost Valley almost immediately began violating the conditions of its permit by improperly handling and storing manure.

Te Velde declared bankruptcy in April 2018 amid allegations of persistent drug use and gambling. Later that year, he was stripped of his control over Lost Valley — along with two other dairies in California — and a federal trustee was put in charge.

The trustee, Randy Sugarman, decided to close and sell the dairy but was first responsible for cleaning up the site. On Dec. 30, 2019, the state ag department issued a “letter of satisfaction” for the cleanup, which included removing all cows, flushing barns and emptying wastewater lagoons.

ODA recently transferred the “zero-animal clean-up permit” to Easterday Farms. Andrea Cantu-Schomas, a spokeswoman for the agency, described it as “essentially the same very protective CAFO permit that was in place with the former operator, minus animals in the production area.”

“The clean-up permit still requires the operator to maintain all the required reporting and monitoring because of the waste storage facilities on site,” she said.

Easterday Farms cannot reopen the dairy until the state approves a new Confined Animal Feeding Operation, or CAFO, permit. The farm has applied for a new CAFO permit, which is under review and expected to go out for public comment this summer.

Oregon’s CAFO program is jointly managed by ODA and the state Department of Environmental Quality.

Easterday Farms Dairy would have up to 28,300 cattle, with 8,000 mature dairy cows and 2,650 heifers housed under roof along with 1,700 mature cows and 5,950 heifers in open confinement. The farm plans to invest \$15 million to bring the operation into full environmental compliance.

According to the CAFO application, the dairy will generate roughly 5.4 million cubic feet of liquid manure, 5.9 million cubic feet of solid manure and 11.7 million cubic feet of processed wastewater annually. The nitrogen-rich manure will be stored in lagoons and used for fertilizer.

Crafting joy in a time of pandemic

Enterprise glass artist works toward community Easter egg hunt

By Ellen Morris Bishop
EO Media Group

ENTERPRISE — Stirling Webb has a grand plan for the resurrection of weary psyches and spirits: an Easter egg hunt unlike any other, whenever the shroud of social distancing lifts and life begins to have a glimmer of normal.

Webb, a glass artist who owns Moonshine Glass in Enterprise, has been making eggs. Glass Easter eggs to be more precise. He originally planned to hide the eggs around Wallowa County for a public Easter egg hunt on Easter, April 12.

“It would be an event everyone could participate in,”

he said. “Maybe there would be some hints about where to look. It would all be in publicly accessible places. It would be a fun community event for everybody.”

Last year, Webb and his assistants at Moonshine Glass hid 40 eggs around the Wallowa County countryside.

“It was a hit,” he said. “All the eggs were found, and there were a lot of really happy kids and families.”

It was finders keepers, too. This year’s “Easter egg hunt on Easter” plan collapsed when social distancing became a necessity.

Rather than give up, Webb is pushing for a bigger, better egg hunt.

Webb has hatched a Kickstarter fund drive to augment his nest egg and ensure he can make enough of his bright, colorful

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Photo by Ellen Morris Bishop/EO Media Group

Four of Stirling Webb’s Easter eggs for 2020 reflect in Wallowa Lake. Webb has had to postpone his second glass Easter egg hunt due to the need for social distancing. But he plans a belated egg hunt as a community celebration once the coronavirus crisis passes. His Kickstarter campaign to support production of more eggs continues through Friday.

Coronavirus shears sheep industry as demand plummets

Pendleton Woolen Mills temporarily shut down operations

By Carol Ryan Dumas
EO Media Group

SALEM — Demand for lamb, wool and pelts is tanking in response to the coronavirus pandemic, industry representatives say, and prices are following suit.

It’s having a tremendous impact on the industry, said John Noh, president of Idaho Wool Growers Association and a board member of the American Sheep Industry Association.

Wool has become unsaleable

because the agency in New Zealand that does commercial testing of U.S. wool has closed due to coronavirus. Trade to major wool buyers in Italy and China has shut down, as has the pelt trade to primary markets in Turkey, China and Russia. Some trade was shut down to a degree before coronavirus, but it’s even worse now, he said.

A large portion of the lamb market is restaurants and cruise ships, and they aren’t operating. The timing is particularly difficult, as Easter is a main event for lamb sales. Grocery trade is up, but that’s for the lesser cuts of shoulder and ground meat. Sales

of the more expensive middle meats are at a standstill, he said.

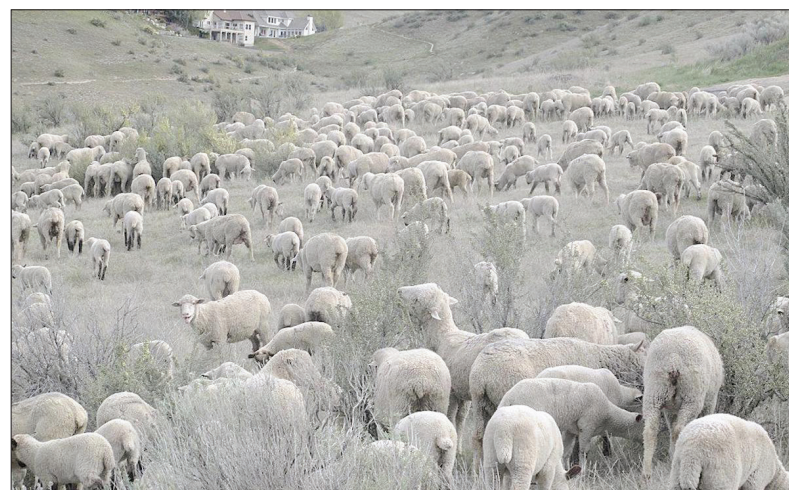
On top of that, the second-largest U.S. lamb packer, Mountain States Rosen, filed for bankruptcy, and its kill rate is way down.

In addition, Pendleton Woolen Mills has temporarily shut down its operations, he said.

“It’s about as rough as I’ve seen it in my 30 years,” he said.

Mountain States Rosen filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection on March 19 with the U.S. Bankruptcy Court for the District of Wyoming, citing lost sales

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EO Media Group file photo

A band of sheep grazes in the Boise foothills. The coronavirus outbreak has hurt the markets for lamb and wool.