

Social distancing made simple
in Outdoors

THE OBSERVER

SERVING UNION AND WALLOWA COUNTIES SINCE 1896

Weekend Edition

SATURDAY-MONDAY • April 11, 2020 • \$1.50 Good day to our valued subscriber Sue Baker of La Grande

Union County COVID-19 cases hit 4

■ Oregon Health Authority reports Wallowa County has one case

Observer staff

LA GRANDE — Union County has its fourth case of COVID-19.

The Center for Human Development Inc., La Grande, on Thursday reported the latest confirmation of someone with the coronavirus in the county.

“This new case was community acquired,” according to the news release from the center, “meaning that the individual does not have a direct epidemiological link to a known confirmed case. This means that the infection was acquired from an unknown source and place in the community.”

“We need to act as if every person we come in contact with is infectious,” according to Elizabeth Sievers, the center’s communicable disease nurse. “Do not go out into the community unless it is necessary. If you do have a necessary need to be in public wash your hands after touching shared surfaces and use a cloth face covering. The only sure way to prevent yourself from getting infected is to quarantine yourself from others.”

The center also reported it and the Oregon Health Authority are working to identify and isolate those who may have been in close contact with this individual in the last 14 days.

“If you are identified as someone that was a contact and may be at risk for COVID-19 you will be contacted,” according to the center.

The center said it cannot share details about the latest individual who has the novel coronavirus due to stated federal and state privacy guidelines and laws.

The Oregon Health Authority this week also reported Wallowa County has its first resident case of

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LINKS TO LIFELINES



La Grande, Union County Chamber, Small Business Development Center reach out to give local businesses a helping hand

By Dick Mason and Ronald Bond
The Observer

LA GRANDE — Phones have been ringing off the hook at the Eastern Oregon University Small Business Development Center, La Grande.

Greg Smith, the center’s director and state representative from District 57, said the inquiries are from business owners trying to gain understanding of federal funding that has been made available in an effort to offset the economic impact of COVID-19.

“For many business owners, their closure has had a tremendous impact on their day-to-day cash flow and their ability to make payments — from rent, to vendors, to utility companies,” Smith said. “What we’re seeing is a tremendous amount of people that are turning to the federal stimulus package that was released and focused on two programs.”

Smith said in the week since funding became available from the federal \$2.2 trillion Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act stimulus package that Congress passed in late March, the development center has met with at least 30 clients daily and is receiving calls from across Northeast Oregon. Most are asking a similar set of questions with regard to the funding: What are the programs? How can they be accessed? Is a business eligible? And what is the timing?

“That’s what people are thinking about,” Smith said. “For many folks, they are thinking it’s too good to be true or not going to qualify. The message we’re sharing is this isn’t too good to be true — Congress created these incentive funds (and) we’re encouraging everyone to apply.”



Staff photos by Ronald Bond

Help is available for businesses struggling during the coronavirus outbreak. The city of La Grande, Union County Chamber of Commerce and Eastern Oregon University Small Business Development Center have been assisting businesses throughout La Grande and Union County in how they can attain funding during the coronavirus outbreak.



Greg Smith, director of the Eastern Oregon University Small Business Development Center, La Grande

The city of La Grande and the Union County Chamber of Commerce also are working to make sure local businesses are aware of and have access to federal and state programs for economic assistance in the wake of COVID-19.

City reaching out

City staff are making phone calls to check in with businesses to find out if they are aware of these programs, including the stimulus package. La Grande City Manager Robert Strobe said heightening awareness of the CARES Act and other resources hopefully will help

the local economy gain momentum faster once the COVID-19 crisis subsides.

“We are making these calls because we want all of our businesses to emerge from the crisis as vibrant as possible,” said Strobe, said in a news release. “La Grande and Union County have a long history of pulling together in times of need and while this situation is unprecedented, there is help and we want our businesses to have access to as many resources as possible.”

Strobe said the response from

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By the numbers*

Worldwide cases:

1,524,161

Worldwide deaths: 92,941

U.S. cases: 459,165

U.S. deaths: 16,570

Oregon cases: 1,371

Oregon deaths: 48

Union County cases: 4

Union County deaths: 0

Wallowa County cases: 1

Wallowa County deaths: 0

*As of 1 p.m. Friday, April 10.

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

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.

•Notify your workplace as soon as possible if your regular work schedule changes.

Ask to work from home or take leave if you or someone in your household gets sick with COVID-19 symptoms.

•Stay in touch with others by phone or email. If you have a chronic medical condition and live alone, ask family, friends and health care providers to check on you.

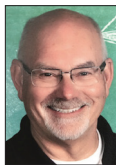
Stay in touch with family and friends, especially those at increased risk of developing severe illness, such as older adults and people with severe chronic medical conditions.

Island City Elementary School principal receives top honor

■ John Tolan named principal of the year in Oregon

By Dick Mason
The Observer

ISLAND CITY — Seventeen months ago, Island City Elementary School principal John Tolan unintentionally put the persuasive powers of La Grande



Tolan

School District Superintendent George Mendoza to the test.

Tolan announced he intended to retire in June of 2019 after a 39-year career with the district. He has been principal of Island City Elementary since 2002. Mendoza did not welcome the

news. He believed Tolan’s skills were so considerable the school district would benefit greatly if he stayed at least one more year.

“I wanted to keep someone like that as long as possible,” Mendoza said.

Tolan, who agreed to stay an extra year, is receiving statewide recognition for the talents the superintendent speaks of. It was announced this week

that he was named the Oregon Elementary School Principal of the Year by the Oregon Elementary School Principals Association and the Confederation of Oregon School Administrators. Tolan is now in the running for the National Elementary School Principal of the Year Award from the National Association of Elementary School Principals.

Tolan said receiving the award was very humbling.

“I don’t think I deserve it. I’m just doing my job and trying to help kids. I’m just a common guy,” said Tolan, who credits the support he received from his wife, Debbie, with playing a key role in his successful career.

Tolan taught fifth grade

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WEATHER

Full forecast on the back of B section



Tonight

25 LOW

Clear and colder



Sunday

50/22

Mostly sunny

CONTACT US

541-963-3161

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



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TUESDAY

COVID-19 AND THE HOUSING MARKET

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