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TUESDAY • April 14, 2020 • \$1.50 Good day to our valued subscriber Terry Mauck of La Grande

Vandals strike Ackles Cemetery

■ Crime garners \$500 reward, hundreds of shares on Facebook

By Dick Mason
The Observer

LA GRANDE — Sunlight was starting to dim when John Lamoreau went to Ackles Cemetery north of La Grande early Wednesday evening.

The fading light did little to obscure a sight that horrified Lamoreau — 15 headstones off their cement bases. Neither Father Time nor the forces of nature did the damage — it was vandals.

“I was heartbroken and absolutely shocked,” said Lamoreau, a La Grande High School social studies teacher and a former Union County Commissioner.

Lamoreau is so upset he is funding a \$500 reward the Union County Sheriff’s Office is offering to anyone who comes forward with information leading to the arrest and conviction of the individual or individuals responsible. Anyone providing information regarding the case will remain anonymous, said Union County Sheriff Boyd Rasmussen.

Crimes go back months

The sheriff said he believes young people partying off and on at the cemetery over a span of



La Grande High School history teacher John Lamoreau on Saturday examines the vandalism of headstones at Ackles Cemetery north of La Grande. Lamoreau is putting up \$500 as a reward to help catch the people responsible.

Staff photo by Dick Mason

“I was heartbroken and absolutely shocked.”

John Lamoreau, a La Grande High School social studies teacher and a former Union County Commissioner.

about six months committed the crimes. He thinks the first damage was done last fall and has continued until early this month. Rasmussen has had deputies increase patrols of the cemetery as reports of suspicious activity have

continued. The vandalism is painful for Rasmussen to see because of how much the cemetery, which is part of the La Grande Cemetery District, means historically to the community. “This raises criminal

mischief to a new level,” Rasmussen said. The sheriff has offered to provide Union County work crews to assist the La Grande Cemetery District with restoration efforts at the old cemetery off Mt. Glen Road. Those work

crews are composed of individuals who have committed low-level crimes and need to do community service. “We can provide manpower,” Rasmussen said.

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By the numbers*

Worldwide cases: 1,776,867
Worldwide deaths: 111,828
U.S. cases: 554,849
U.S. deaths: 21,942
Oregon cases: 1,584
Oregon deaths: 53
Union County cases: 4
Union County deaths: 0
Wallowa County cases: 1
Wallowa County deaths: 0

*As of 3 p.m. Monday, April 13. 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.

850-plus Union County residents seek unemployment since March 15

■ Manufacturing tops losses, with 383 jobs gone in three weeks

By Ronald Bond
The Observer

LA GRANDE — The Oregon Employment Department reported 269 Union County residents filed last week for unemployment. The number is down from 307 the week before but follows a similar trend to the rest of the nation.

Unemployment claims nationwide spiked for the

third week in a row as more individuals find themselves out of work due to government-imposed closures to help slow the spread of the coronavirus.

More than 6.6 million people nationwide filed for unemployment last week, the U.S. Department of Labor announced Thursday, the second week in the row the number of filings has exceeded more than 6.6 million. Last week’s record unemployment claims were revised upward to more than 6.8 million.

In the last three weeks, roughly 16.7 million people

nationwide have been forced out of work.

Oregon’s numbers reached a record level for the third week in a row, with the state receiving 100,700 initial claims for the week ending April 4, according to the Oregon Employment Department. By comparison, the highest number of claims in a week during the Great Recession was 20,916.

The department noted the stark contrast between the 269,900 claims received in Oregon in the last three weeks alone and the 147,800 job losses during the entire Great Reces-

sion. The number from the last three weeks is 82.6% higher.

Nearly a quarter of the claims from the last week — 24,000 — were filed in Multnomah, Washington and Lane counties.

During the week ending March 21, Union County saw 281 new unemployment claims, meaning 857 individuals have filed during the last three weeks.

In February in Union County, 10,510 non-farm employees and 656 people were unemployed, according to the department website.

Manufacturing is the

hardest-hit industry in the Union County by far, with 383 jobs gone in three weeks.

That number accounts for more than 29% of the 1,310 manufacturing jobs in the county as of February.

Close to half of the total (184) came during the week ending March 21, and that week alone exceeds the number of jobs lost in other industries since March 15. The loss of manufacturing jobs has decreased since that March 21 spike, but even the 167 filings reported the week ending April 4 exceeds the

66 claims filed the entire year before the layoffs began.

Accommodation and food services has seen 165 jobs lost in the county, and health care and social assistance workers have filed 85 claims.

Neighboring Umatilla County has 1,649 claims, with nearly half of those (757) coming in just the last week. Baker County had 301 claims in the last three weeks, while Wallowa County had 110. In February, the counties had workforces of 28,210 (Umatilla), 5,580 (Baker) and 2,560 (Wallowa).

Residents do their part to help protect hospital workers

By Ronald Bond
The Observer

LA GRANDE — When reports of personal protective equipment for doctors, nurses and others on the hospital front lines of the coronavirus started popping up nationwide, several Union County residents reached out to Grande Ronde Hospital staff to see what the care facility needed.

“I reached out to a few of my friends (at the hospital) and as well to the director of nursing, Beth Callison,” said Diane Hedrick, a retired nurse who now serves on the Board of Directors of the Oregon Nurses Association. “She assured me they were in good shape, but we had the conversation about the fabric masks and whether there was a place for them,

and we went from there.” Cheryl Simpson also reached out to the hospital.

“We wanted to know whether or not our local health care providers were safe,” she said.

Design gets hospital OK

The two were linked up and in the last two weeks — joined by a network

of about 40 volunteers, Simpson said — have been able to deliver more than 150 cloth masks to the hospital. What’s more, the mask, which Hedrick designed and the hospital approved, can be reinforced with additional filtering to increase its effectiveness.

“I borrowed the design from one that had been approved for use in the

PeaceHealth system,” she said. “Our pattern is different in that it doesn’t have elastic, it has ties. In my research, the ties were preferable.”

In all, Grande Ronde has received close to 200 masks from the public, and more are sure to come in the coming days and weeks.

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WEATHER

Full forecast on the back of B section



Tonight
41 LOW
A few showers



Wednesday
56/29
A shower in spots

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La Grande, Oregon

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



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THURSDAY

BUSINESS STRATEGIES FOR COVID-19

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