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TUESDAY • April 21, 2020 • \$1.50 Good day to our valued subscriber Linda Ables of La Grande

Eastern Oregon counties push to reopen

By **Ellen Morris Bishop**
EO Media Group

ENTERPRISE — County commissioners from Wallowa and other Eastern Oregon counties scheduled a conversation Monday afternoon with Gov. Kate Brown about partially opening up businesses in Eastern Oregon. Last week, county commissioners of Wallowa County along with Baker, Deschutes, Grant, Malheur, Harney, Jefferson, Union,

Lake, Wasco and Klamath counties asked Brown for “a conversation about partly opening up Eastern Oregon.” Not every commissioner signed on to the letter. Wallowa County Commissioner Susan Roberts, who initiated and wrote the letter, stressed “this was a letter asking for a conversation about a partial opening, not at all a request to open.” Wallowa County sent its letter April 13. Eight other

Eastern Oregon counties emailed another Thursday. That afternoon, Roberts said, the governor agreed to talk with the counties Monday. “We pointed out that Eastern Oregon’s small business economy was really hurting, a lot of our small businesses are hanging on by their teeth, and in rural Oregon we are pretty well distanced anyway,” Roberts said. “We know that to open, we

have to show a downward trend in COVID-19 cases. We think we can show that here. We don’t have any so we can’t get much farther down than that.” Some of Brown’s thoughts seem headed in the same direction. In a Saturday, April 18, interview with Oregon Public Broadcasting’s Dave Miller, Brown said, “My top priority right now is to protect the health and safety of Oregonians.... But we

also have to balance that, at some level, with people’s livelihoods. And I think we can do this. We can do it via geography, county by county. We can do it by region. ... We have to try this. We know that not everything we’re going to do is going to work, but we have to try something. We can’t stand still.” However, Brown emphasized the capacity

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By the numbers*

Worldwide cases: 2,314,621
Worldwide deaths: 157,847
U.S. cases: 746,625
U.S. deaths: 39,083
Oregon cases: 1,956
Oregon deaths: 75
Union County cases: 4
Union County deaths: 0
Wallowa County cases: 1
Wallowa County deaths: 0
*As of 3 p.m. Monday, April 20. Sources: World Health Organization, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Oregon Health Authority

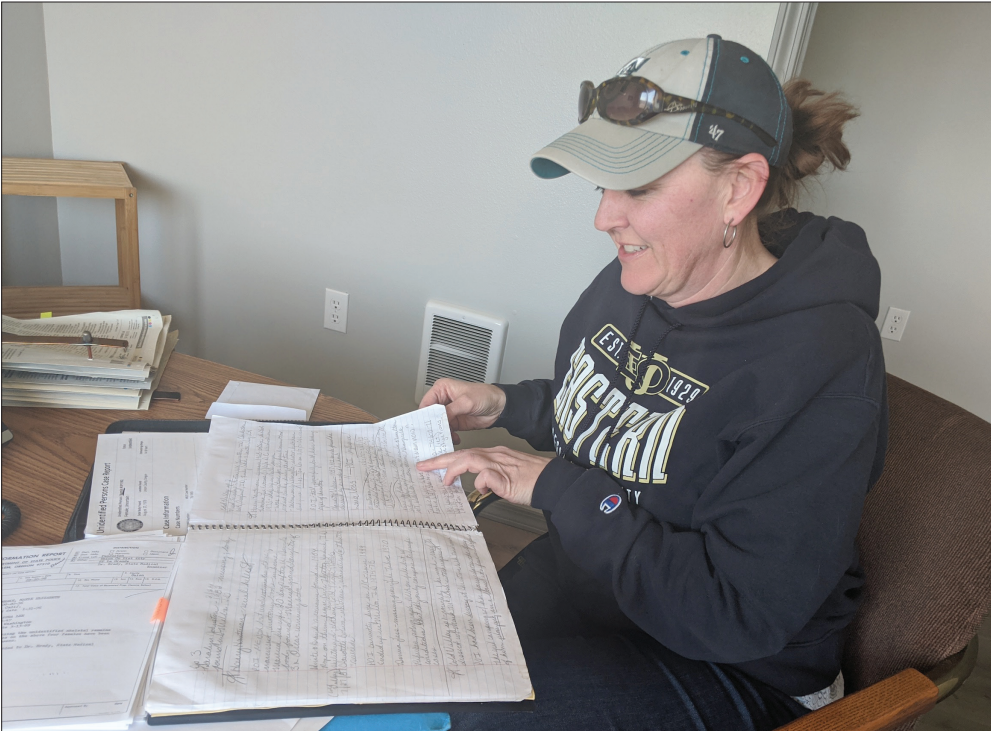
Team digs into local mystery

■ La Grande woman seeks to name the unknown Finley Creek victim

By **Phil Wright**
The Observer

LA GRANDE — Melinda Jederberg of La Grande has a mission — find out the identity of a young woman who was found in a shallow grave near Elgin. And if luck prevails, find out who put her there. Jederberg said she knows that’s a long shot. The case has been cold since hunters in late August 1978 found the human remains near a log on Finley Creek some 18 miles north of La Grande. The Observer covered the story at the time. The woman was 18-25, according to the report at the time from state medical examiner Dr. William Bradley, stood 5

feet 2 inches to 5 feet 4 inches tall, weighed 114-140 pounds. She had light brown or blond hair. She was pregnant and likely near delivery. And the remains may have been there for four years. Jederberg, who earned a bachelor’s degree in criminology in 2007 from Eastern Oregon University, La Grande, has long kept her interest in crime. She came across The Doe Network last year, a website devoted to cold cases of missing and unidentified people. She said she wanted to find out whether there were cases in Union County. And at the top of the list was the Finley Creek case. “I never heard of this,” she said. “How is it possible I never heard of this?” She started to dig and has not stopped. She took to Facebook and created the page Finley Creek Jane Doe — Elgin, OR to raise awareness and maybe



Melinda Jederberg shows notes she has taken while working to identify the girl that hunters found in a shallow grave in 1978 near Elgin.

bump into a clue. Others found the page, and now Jederberg is part of a five-person team with mem-

bers throughout the West. In March, they obtained a copy of the Oregon State Police file on the case with

details of the crime scene such as what the young

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High court ruling affects Oregon’s verdict laws

■ Union County has two cases on appeal because of the issue

By **Conrad Wilson**
Oregon Public Broadcasting

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Supreme Court ruled 6-3 Monday that the U.S. Constitution requires unanimous jury verdicts in state criminal courts. The move ends Oregon’s history of using non-unanimous juries to find people guilty of crimes other than murder. Specifically, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled the 14th Amendment incorporates a person’s Sixth Amendment right to jury unanimity. Oregon was the last state in the country that utilized a non-unanimous jury law, allowing convictions in many types of cases with an 11-1 or 10-2 decision. Monday’s Supreme Court case was out of Louisiana, though that state had previously ended the practice of non-unanimous juries through a measure approved by voters. Union County District Attorney Kelsie McDaniel is a board member of the Oregon District Attorneys Association, which since 2018 has supported efforts to require unanimous jury verdicts. “While our office is currently analyzing the opinion for how it will impact pending and closed matters, we do know that only three cases from Union County were on direct appeal for this issue, one of which has already been closed,” McDaniel said. “We expect to receive additional analysis and guidance from the Oregon

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Display at La Grande High School honors seniors

By **Dick Mason**
The Observer

LA GRANDE — The COVID-19 pandemic has likely robbed La Grande High School’s seniors of a traditional graduation ceremony but it will not steal their spotlight. For proof, check out the expansive north windows of La Grande High School’s library. The names of all of the approximately 170 LHS seniors set to grad-

uate in June are displayed in the form of eye-catching vinyl blue and white cutouts attached to the windows late last week. “We are celebrating what they have achieved,” said Angie Malone, the coordinator of LHS’s Career Technical Education program. Malone is part of a team of four La Grande High staff members conducting the library window project, one which will be

completed later when the class of 2020’s individual honors are added to the library’s middle north windows. Joining Malone on the window salute project are library assistant Juliette Childs, secretary Patty O’Reilly and Lezlie Wright, coordinator of the ASPIRE student mentoring program. So striking are the displays that on first glance

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La Grande High School seniors Nicholas DuVernay and Alyssa Schelin check out the school’s display honoring graduating seniors on Monday.

Central conducts emotional spirit parade

By **Dick Mason**
The Observer

LA GRANDE — Members of Central Elementary School’s staff lined their closed campus Friday and opened their hearts to its students and families. Central’s campus, closed for classes since March 14 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, was the site of a memorable spirit parade. About 40 of the school’s

teachers and staff stood outside and greeted children as they traveled — via foot, bicycles and motor vehicles — to pick up free lunches and breakfasts Friday morning. The students have been picking up free lunches and breakfasts for most of the past month and usually have been greeted by about half a dozen staff members. On Friday though they were met by many

of the school’s staff members who stood at least six feet apart on the sidewalks in front of the school and greeted students. “We waved and waved. The kids were so moved that it was hard to describe,” said Central Principal Suzy Mayes. Central’s staff members, many who held signs with heartfelt messages, waved at students and their families as they passed

by, in most cases in motor vehicles. “Almost all of us got choked up and so did a lot of families,” Mayes said. Cries from teachers and staff of “We love you” and “We miss you” could be heard throughout the parade. Students and their families also displayed handmade signs with messages

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WEATHER

Full forecast on the back of B section

Tonight 39 LOW Partly cloudy
Wednesday 56/43 Cooler with rain

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

