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Wallowa schools have new leader

■ Tammy Jones leaves Washington principal job, starts new role July 1

By Ellen Morris Bishop
EO Media Group

WALLOWA — The Wallowa School District is getting a new superintendent.

But Tammy Jones, who is giving up her principal's job in Snohomish, Washington, won't have any trouble finding a place to live. She already owns a home in Joseph.

Jones, 57, who holds a doctorate in education, comes to Wallowa after 14 years as an elementary school principal in a relatively rural part of north-west Washington, about an hour north of Seattle. But she has deep Eastern Oregon roots.

Her career started in Eastern Oregon school districts, including Athena/Weston, Milton-Freewater, Helix and Pilot Rock. She served as the Hermiston School District's director of special education and then as an elementary school principal.

Wallowa County has long held a special place in her heart.

"When my son, who's 34 now, was only 2 years old, we were going up to the top of the tram and spending time on Wallowa Lake," she said. "We camped over here all the time, fly-fished the rivers and hiked. My son married a local girl (Shana Beck), and they live in Joseph now."

The Wallowa School Board's vote to hire Jones was unanimous.

"I believe Tammy is well-suited to be the elementary principal and superintendent," said Woody Wolfe, school board chairman. "She has a lot of experience, a very positive

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Staff photo by Dick Mason

La Grande High School band student senior Chris Kirby plays the trumpet Tuesday at his home for teacher Chris Leavitt, who instructs Kirby and other students online during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Distance poses challenges

■ Teaching online more taxing, less invigorating than in real classroom

By Dick Mason
The Observer

LA GRANDE — La Grande High School French and English teacher Kevin Cahill is concerned not about what he is seeing but what he is missing.

Cahill and all educators at public schools in Oregon are instructing their classes remotely because of stay-at-home restrictions imposed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. He and other public school teachers in Oregon are able to see and talk with their students via online tools such as Google Classroom. Still, Cahill is frustrated because he is not able to fully see how his students are responding to his lessons.

"When you are not able to see kids in a classroom you sort of lose a whole spectrum," Cahill said. "You can't read their body language and you can't observe their interaction with peers."

The educator takes such indicators into con-

sideration when determining if students are understanding the concepts he is teaching. Without such cues, Cahill does not believe he is getting an intuitive feel for how his students are doing.

Anne March, a Spanish teacher at La Grande High, shares this worry.

"I rely so much on observation for cues," March said.

Lacking connectedness

While teachers are able to talk to and see their students in group settings online, Cahill said something is missing in terms of a sense of connectedness and energy.

"It is not a real friendly environment for group interaction," he said.

The educator said he senses his students feel the same way and the absence of in-person interactions is detrimental.

"They really miss each other," Cahill said.

All La Grande School District students have



Staff photo by Dick Mason

La Grande High School student Chris Kirby sits at the computer station Tuesday at his home while taking classes online.

been receiving distance education since at least April 13, when a state mandate took effect.

"It is so different. It turned our world upside down," said March, who credits fellow LHS Spanish teacher Sid Rangel with providing her with valuable assistance.

Teachers miss hustle and bustle

Cahill said he is learning a lot about technology during his foray into distance education.

He said there is no doubt he will apply some of what he has learned when he returns again to teaching in a classroom setting.

Ironically, technology's strength also is a weakness, Cahill said. It allows teachers to do everything from meeting one-on-one with students to preparing class presentations and answering text messages and emails in one place.

"I can do everything without ever moving away

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State agencies to prepare for spending cuts

By Peter Wong
Oregon Capital Bureau

SALEM — State agencies have been told to prepare spending cuts that may amount to 8.5% of their share of the tax-supported general fund in the next two years.

The proposed cuts, which Gov. Kate Brown has directed state budget officials to compile by May 8, would add up to just under \$2 billion. They also would be deeper than 8.5%, given that state government already is 10 months into its 2019-21

budget cycle.

"At this point, the reduction plans are a planning exercise that will give the governor a series of options to consider," said Elizabeth Merah, a spokesperson for Brown.

Oregon's two-year budget from the general fund — largely personal and corporate income taxes that make up more than 90% — and lottery proceeds is \$23.7 billion. The state spends more, but federal grants are earmarked and other funds are restricted.

Tax collections and lottery proceeds are likely to fall far short of projections because shutdowns and curtailments linked to the coronavirus pandemic have resulted in worker layoffs and less business activity. Most Oregon Lottery proceeds are generated by video terminals, which are in bars, taverns and restaurants shuttered to the public.

The state's next quarterly economic and revenue forecast is scheduled for Wednesday, May 20.

"While we do not

know the precise impacts of the forecast, we do know it will be a significant drop in state revenues," said a memo from Chief Financial Officer George Naughton and his deputy, Kate Nass. "This impact could be as high as a loss of \$2 (billion) to \$3 billion in state resources during the current 2019-21 biennium."

The most recent forecast had projected an ending balance of \$1.153 billion, but the request

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By the numbers*

Worldwide cases:

2,883,603

Worldwide deaths:

198,842

U.S. cases: 1,005,147

U.S. deaths: 57,505

Oregon cases: 2,446

Oregon deaths: 101

Union County cases: 4

Union County deaths: 0

Wallowa County cases: 1

Wallowa County deaths: 0

*As of 1 p.m. Wednesday,

April 29. Sources: World Health Organization, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Oregon Health Authority

Healthy habits at home

■ Balanced diet, small goals can be key to keeping fit

By Sabrina Thompson
The Observer

LA GRANDE — As the weeks of stay home and save lives continue, healthy eating and physical habits for many has become either a newfound hobby or a dreaded and difficult task. Local mental and nutritional experts shared tips and information about staying healthy in mind and body.

"Stress can play a significant role in our lives," said Hannah Robinson, registered dietitian at Grande Ronde Hospital, La Grande. "It can affect what we eat or drink, how we react to situations, and interrupt our sleep patterns. Due to all these influences, eating healthy and continuing physical activity often times takes a back focus when in reality, this what our body needs most."

Nutritional health

Healthy eating, according to Robinson, involves achieving a balance among all food groups in the correct portions. This means eating more whole foods without additives and eating less processed foods.

"A nutrient that tends to be forgotten is water," Robinson said. "Water is crucial for our body and is most helpful if we can drink it in its natural form."

Robinson said eating frozen and processed foods likely is to become more common with the stay-home order as they have a longer shelf life. However, these foods often are full of fats, salt and sugar that are not healthy. She said there likely is an increase in snacking as well, but often people are unaware of this habit, especially in times of stress. And when one of the only reasons to leave the house is

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WEATHER

Full forecast on the back of B section



Tonight
33 LOW
Colder



Friday
64/38
Mostly cloudy

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Issue 52
3 sections, 20 pages
La Grande, Oregon

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



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