



# EOU volleyball signs eight

In Sports

## RE-ELECT BOYD RASMUSSEN for SHERIFF



John C Cuthbert, David R Orcutt, Linda & Sheldon Strand

# THE OBSERVER

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## Weekend Edition

SATURDAY-MONDAY • May 16, 2020 • \$1.50 Good day to our valued subscriber Mike Jordan of La Grande



Photos by Observer staff

Clockwise from top left: Steve Thompson, a cook at the Longbranch Bar & Eats, La Grande, cleans Thursday in the kitchen of the Skippers restaurant at Short Stop Xtreme, La Grande. Grant Meyer, co-owner of Community Kindness of Eastern Oregon, sets up a plastic barrier in preparation for the store's May 28 reopening. Blue Mountain Barbers owner Kate Schaffner cuts Dalton Sheets' hair Friday morning, the first day many Union County businesses were able to be open in Phase 1 of the state's reopening plan. These and many other businesses in Union County and Oregon are reopening for business as the state eases COVID-19 restrictions.

## LG School Board OKs furloughs for staffers

### School district looking at cut of \$2.55 million

By Dick Mason  
The Observer

LA GRANDE — The La Grande School Board voted Wednesday to approve a plan that will furlough all teachers and staff one day a week for much of the remainder of 2019-20.

The purpose of the furloughs is to save money during the COVID-19 pandemic, money the district will use to buffer the impact of looming budget cuts in 2020-21. The board endorsed the furlough plan after the La Grande School District's teacher and classified staff unions voted in support of the furlough days. Each union overwhelmingly supported the furlough days, with each voting at least 90% in favor, said La Grande School District Superintendent George Mendoza.

Mendoza said the school district has applied to the Oregon Work Share Program to compensate employees for the pay they will lose due to the lost workdays. The state already has agreed to provide Work Share Oregon funding to help other school districts where employees are taking furlough days, said La Grande School Board Chair Merle Comfort.

Administration, confidential and teaching staff will furlough four workdays from May 11 to June 30, and classified staff, which includes cooks, secretaries and physical plant staff, will furlough four workdays from May 14 to June 5.

The furlough program will allow the school district to save \$300,000 on employee pay for the remainder of the school year.

"We are looking at many, many ways to reduce costs in the district. This is one way right now we can save money without dramatically impacting employees financially," Mendoza said in a news release.

Oregon Gov. Kate Brown's shutdown order to prevent the spread of the virus has had a terrible effect on the state's economy because it

See, [Furloughs/Page 3A](#)

# Union County reopens for business

### Partial reopening in effect for 21 days, county must avoid certain thresholds in order to stay open

By Ronald Bond, Dick Mason and Sabrina Thompson  
The Observer

LA GRANDE — Kate Schaffner's excitement of being back in business could probably speak for all business owners in northeast Oregon who are reopening their doors.

The owner of Blue Mountain Barbers, along with four additional barbers who work as independent contractors in her La Grande shop, was able to resume seeing customers Friday after nearly eight weeks of not operating due to stay-home orders and the closure of businesses deemed nonessential in the wake of the coronavirus.

"(It's) a necessity," she said of going back to work, "and I think by nature, people who work in the business need people. We built

ongoing relationships, and we worry about them a lot."

Oregon Gov. Kate Brown announced Thursday morning that most Oregon counties will be able to enter into a phased approach for reopening, leaving behind the limits on activities she put in place in March with an executive order to fight the spread of COVID-19.

By the end of Thursday, 31 of 36 counties received approval for partial reopening. All counties east of the Cascade Mountains can enter Phase 1, as can southern Oregon counties. In the Willamette Valley, the populous counties of Lane, Linn and Benton also received permission to reopen. Businesses will have to follow the reopening requirements the Oregon Health Authority established.

### STATE STORY INSIDE

To read more about reopening plans in Oregon, see the article on [Page 7A](#).

For Schaffner and Blue Mountain Barbers, this means keeping their work stations at least 6 feet apart, using new capes for each customer and cleaning the stations in between clients, which she said will take about 10 minutes each.

"We're going to take turns cleaning as we get through people," she said. "One person will be assigned to do extra cleaning. With all of us there, it'll be more efficient."

The reopening began the same morning as the Center for Human Development Inc., Union County's public health authority, announced the county's fifth case of COVID-19. Later Friday, Oregon Health

Authority confirmed a second case in Wallowa County.

The Union County case was a contact to a confirmed case, according to the center's press release, and the center is working to find out who else may have been in close contact with the person and isolate them. Close contact, according to the center, is anyone within 6 feet of an individual with the virus for more than 15 minutes.

Elizabeth Sieders, communicable disease nurse at the center, said in the press release with reopening comes the anticipation of "a growing number of people identified as contacts to a confirmed case."

### Shop owners, employees endure tough times

Schaffner said it has been a challenge since her shop closed in late March.

See, [Open/Page 5A](#)

*"It will be a very different world going forward. Anything in the direction of normal is good."*

— Matt Scarfo, Union County commissioner and pub owner

*"It will likely be a different experience because we are asking businesses to put mitigation in place."*

— Carrie Brogoitti, Union County public health administrator

*"One of our main objectives is to keep everyone safe."*

— Liz Meyer, co-owner, Community Kindness of Eastern Oregon

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### WEATHER

Full forecast on the back of B section

Tonight 49 LOW  
Showers around

Sunday 65/46  
A few showers

### CONTACT US

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Email story ideas to [news@lagrandeobserver.com](mailto:news@lagrandeobserver.com).  
More contact info on Page 4A.

TUESDAY THE DALGONA COFFEE SENSATION

Online at [lagrandeobserver.com](http://lagrandeobserver.com)



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# CODY BOWEN

## FOR SHERIFF



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