

SERVING UNION AND WALLOWA COUNTIES SINCE 1896

THE OBSERVER

Weekend Edition

SATURDAY-MONDAY • May 30, 2020 • \$1.50 Good day to our valued subscriber Dave Binger of La Grande

COVID-19 by the numbers*

Worldwide cases: 5,704,736
Worldwide deaths: 357,736
U.S. cases: 1,719,827
U.S. deaths: 101,711

Total U.S. tests: 15,766,114
Oregon cases: 4,131
Oregon active cases: 1,999
Oregon deaths: 151
Total Oregon tests: 122,579
Union County cases: 6

Union County active cases: 1
Union County deaths: 0
Total Union County tests: 403
Wallowa County cases: 2
Wallowa County active cases: 1
Wallowa County deaths: 0

Total Wallowa County tests: 128
*As of 2:45 p.m. Friday, May 29.
Sources: World Health Organization, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Oregon Health Authority and Oregon Military Department.



Staff photo by Ronald Bond

Ben Herron, 10, shaves the neck of his goat, Jimmy, in preparation for the Eastern Oregon Livestock Show's Jr. Market Auction, which this year will be virtual due to the coronavirus restrictions.

La Grande storyteller publishes first book

■ Evelyn Donnell writes inspirational stories of survival

By Dick Mason
The Observer

LA GRANDE — A 93-year-old La Grande storyteller has published her first book, and she is just getting started.

Evelyn Donnell is the author of a new book that tells inspiring stories of survival: "Mandated Miracles: How God Leaves His Fingerprints on Our Lives — My Story of Miracles."

The new book details the many miracles Donnell has experienced, ones she credits to God's intervention and not simply good fortune.

"There are no coincidences," said Donnell, who plans to write a romance novel next.

She said if people reflect upon their lives, they will find God's direction at work in remarkable ways. Donnell understands this from firsthand experience.

"My life has been an amazing amount of excitement, tears wiped away, laughter and undeserved faithfulness from someone who can demolish fear with a whisper or a shout, when needed," Donnell writes.

She penned her book in response to surviving emergency surgery that involved the insertion of a pacemaker a year-and-a-half ago at St. Luke's Medical Center, Boise. While on the surgery table, she knew her condition was serious, but she was not concerned.

"I was at total peace knowing that I might be soon hopping on God's helicopter to heaven," she wrote.

Then she heard someone ask, "Evelyn, do you want to go to heaven now, or do you want to stay longer here on Earth?"

Donnell wrote she did not know where the query came from.

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Getting set for a virtual auction

■ EOLS Jr. Market Auction set for June 13

By Ronald Bond
The Observer

LA GRANDE — With the Eastern Oregon Livestock Show canceled for the first time ever, the event's Jr. Market Auction is going digital.

The 4-H sale will take place June 13, and the company Virtual Stockshow will be providing the platform for the nearly 250 entries that buyers will be able to bid on.

"There wasn't any other option but to go virtual," Union County

"It was interesting. It was weird. I'm not used to cutting hair. It was kind of fun."

Ben Herron, after shaving his goat in preparation for an online auction

4-H extension agent Carole Smith said, noting 4-H remains under closure orders because it is part of the university system.

Rather than showing their animals to judges and, later, to prospective buyers in person at the livestock show, everything for this year's auction will be uploaded through links on the Oregon State University extension office's website. That includes the 248 show

animal entries for Union County youth and buyers, down from an average of about 400 in recent years.

Youth looking to sell their market animals — hogs, goats, lambs and steers — are in the final stages of preparing them for sale. Starting Monday, the 4Hers can begin filming their official 90-second videos showing the animals and then June 7-8 they can upload the videos. Sample

videos on the website show contestants walking their animals. Horse exhibitors will be able to do up to two 90-second videos for their pattern, according to the extension office website.

Judges then will view and rank the animals June 11-12 for the sale at 9 a.m. June 13. Each animal will be up for auction for 90 seconds, Smith said.

Smith said linking up with Virtual Stockshow was a major plus.

"We were going to make it up ourselves," she said. "This was a good option to go with."

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Feeling the pinch without an unemployment check

■ About half of Oregon residents who have filed for unemployment have yet to receive payment

By Ronald Bond
The Observer

LA GRANDE — More than 400,000 Oregonians have filed unemployment claims since the start of the coronavirus pandemic in late March, but roughly half of them have not yet received a single check from the program.

The Oregon Employment Department Wednesday told a legislative hearing that about

220,000 claims have yet to be paid, according to The Oregonian. It later said the real number is closer to 200,000.

Regardless, there is a large portion of Oregonians without work who have not received a payment, some of whom have been on the unemployment dole for about 10 weeks.

The Oregonian report stated OED director Kay Erickson said

the department has ramped up the number of people in the department who are processing claims from 100 prior to the pandemic to 700. Still, roughly 10%, or more than 40,000 initial claims, since March 15 have yet to be processed, according to the Employment Department website.

Union County is among the hardest-hit areas in the state with an unemployment rate of 19.3%, according to OED data, and a total of 1,873 initial claims from the county have been filed since the start of the outbreak. The manu-

facturing industry has been particularly hammered, with 540 of the county's 1,271 continued claims for the month of April coming from people in that industry.

Several laid-off Union County residents have been left without a payment, some for as long as the entire length of the shutdown that Gov. Kate Brown ordered to slow the spread of the coronavirus.

Emily Turley was laid off for exactly two months from her position at Lucky's Pub & Eatery in

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Union County Fourth of July events canceled

■ COVID-19 limits on gatherings mean no fireworks shows

Dick Mason
The Observer

UNION COUNTY — Union County will have its quietest Fourth of July in many years.

The two cornerstones of Union County's Fourth of July activities — the midday Imbler parade and

the evening fireworks show in Union — have been canceled because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Both were canceled because it would be difficult to conduct them in a manner that meets state standards for social distancing and group gatherings.

"There is no way we could guarantee that people would stay the right distance from each other. We don't want to endanger anyone," said Pat Lang, president of

the Union County Fireworks Action Committee.

Lang said the 2021 Union County fireworks show will have added features to compensate for this year's cancellation.

"It will be an extra good show to make up for (the 2020 cancellation)," Lang said.

This year's fireworks show would have been the third straight in Union.

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Observer file photo

Union's Fourth of July firework show is on hiatus due to the fallout from the coronavirus, and Imbler canceled its Fourth of July parade as well.

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WEATHER Full forecast on the back of B section



Tonight
50 LOW
A heavy t-storm



Sunday
66/47
Some sun; cooler

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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