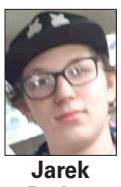
Search continues for runaway La Grande teen

By Sabrina Thompson
The Observer


Jarek Parker

LA GRANDE — Jarek Parker remains missing as of Monday morning, according to Lt. Jason Hays of the La Grande Police Department. There is no evidence of foul play, he said, and the police department and Union County Search and Rescue are continuing their search for the missing 13 year old.

Parker weighs 130 pounds and is 5 feet 4 inches tall with light brown hair and hazel eyes. When he went missing his family reported he took a backpack, a teal-colored fanny pack, camping supplies, food and water with him. An initial siting reported Parker was on Interstate 84 heading West near Perry, but a search of the area during the weekend turned up no signs of the teen.

Jarek's mother, Emily Parker, said without any leads since the initial sighting there is not much of a direction to send people at this time. She said dozens of community members have been searching for him on ATVs, on foot and on the Grande Ronde River from La Grande to Perry and Hilgard alongside search and rescue volunteers and the police department.

The reasons for Parker's disappearance are private, and Emily Parker said she and the family just want his safe return.

"He is not in trouble," Emily Parker said. "We just want him to come home, and know he is okay."

Hays said Jarek's age makes the case more difficult than other missing person cases because of the lack of records from cellphone, social media, credit cards or bank accounts.

Hays also said Parker is not related to or connected with Jesse or James Parker of the Lighthouse Pentecostal Church.

Anyone with information to assist the police in locating Parker can contact Detective Ryan Miller with the La Grande Police Department at 541-963-1017.

"The La Grande Police Department knows that every hour that goes by where Jarek is missing is another hour of anguish Jarek's family is experiencing," Hays said.

New network helping to address hunger during pandemic

By Dick Mason
The Observer

Staff photo by Dick Mason

Lloyd Anthoney, who works at the Union County Senior Center, examines some of the food there which is provided free to the public via its Harvest Share program.

LA GRANDE — A new Eastern Oregon organization is extending a helping hand to individuals who want to assist others with food issues during the coronavirus pandemic.

The Eastern Oregon Mutual Aid Network encourages people who want to volunteer but are not sure how to do so. The network puts volunteers in touch with the right people.

"It (working through the network) is a way to bring together local support," said Meghan Chancey, program coordinator for Eastern Oregon Mutual Aid Network, part of the Eastern Oregon Healthy Living Alliance, which has its headquarters in Lakeview.

The EO Mutual Aid Network has been in place just three months, but the Eastern Oregon Healthy Living Alliance has been in existence since 2014. The Mutual Aid Network was started to help the Eastern Oregon region deal with pandemic-related issues.

The Mutual Aid Network has helped local organizations, such as Community Connection of Northeast Oregon, which operates a food bank serving pantries in Union, Wallowa, Baker and Grant counties. Community Connection has had an increased need for volunteers to assist at the pantries it serves since the pandemic hit. The Mutual Aid Network has helped Community Connection address this need by directing volunteers to it, Chancey said.

"People are needed to assist during the food crisis," she said.

Volunteers also are needed to pick up groceries for the homebound. These include seniors who do not want to leave home during the pandemic because they are at higher risk of being hospitalized if they contract COVID-19. These are often people who are relatively easy to help.

"Delivering groceries one day a week or once a month to someone can make a tremendous difference," Chancey said.

The Eastern Oregon Mutual Aid Network received a big boost three months ago when it received funding from a grant from the Oregon Community Foundation, one the Eastern Oregon Healthy Living Alliance applied for.

"That really helped us develop our program," said Chancey, who lives in Baker City.

The EO Mutual Aid Network had conducted a survey in Eastern Oregon before receiving the grant funding. It indicated that food issues were one of the biggest challenges the region was facing because of the pandemic. This put the Mutual Aid Network on its present course.

In addition to urging people to volunteer, the Mutual Aid Network is encouraging people to donate to food pantries. Chancy said people are also encouraged to donate personal hygiene items including soap, shampoo and toothpaste.

For more information about how to request support or offer support via the Eastern Oregon Mutual Aid Network, visit its website at http://eohla.org/easternoregonmutualaid or call Chancey at 907-712-7595.

EOU to start theater renovations soon

By Dick Mason
The Observer

LA GRANDE — McKenzie and Schwarz theatres abruptly went dark at Eastern Oregon University in mid-March. The theaters at the La Grande campus closed like other schools in Oregon due to the coronavirus pandemic.

The curtains of the theaters will someday rise again, and when they do, audiences will applaud outstanding student performances and what will have almost disappeared — obstacles for people who have mobility issues.

McKenzie and Schwarz theatres soon will be much easier for those with infirmities to move about in thanks to major renovation work set to start July 13.

The state-funded work will be part of a $5.5 million remodeling of Loso Hall, which houses McKenzie and Schwarz theatres. Upgrading of Loso Hall's heating, air conditioning and ventilation systems also are part of this renovation.

The renovation will be among the most extensive work Loso Hall has received since it opened in 1990.

"We need to take care of the building. It is one of the key buildings on campus. It is a great educational facility," said Tim Seydel, EOU's vice president for university advancement.

The work at McKenzie Theatre will be perhaps the most dramatic in Loso Hall. It will include the installation of a lift on the outside of its north-central exterior. The lift will carry people with mobility issues to the top of the first tier of McKenzie Theatre's seating, where handicapped accessible seating will be available, Seydel said.

Another McKenzie addition will be bridges leading to the stage at the two first-floor side entrances. The bridges will make it easier for people with mobility issues to get to the stage.

The seating in McKenzie Theatre will be reduced from 446 to 420 to create space for the new disabled accessibility features.

Union County curb ramps get upgrade

By Sabrina Thompson
The Observer

UNION COUNTY — The Oregon Department of Transportation is starting its work updating sidewalk curb ramps throughout Union County for cities to improve safety and bring the sidewalks up to Americans with Disability Act standards.

Residents of La Grande, Island City, Cove, Imbler and Elgin can expect to see construction starting this fall through the next year.

La Grande has 15 curbs that will be revamped, while Island City's project includes 44 curb ramps along Highway 82 with several at the intersection of Walton Road. The majority will be on West First Street and North McAlister Road.

Imbler's 34 curb upgrades will be along Ruckman Avenue starting at Hull Lane and ending just before Striker Lane.

Elgin has 100 ramps on the Hells Canyon Scenic Byway, Albany Street and Division Street.

Cove's project will repair 24 ramps along Main Street and at the southwest corner of Jasper and Foster streets.

The sidewalk curb ramp update is a federally funded project that will cost about $5.8 million.

ODOT is in the process of designing the curb ramps and selecting a contractor. Once that's done, project manager Bryan Strasser said, a complete time table for how long construction will take at each intersection will be available.

During construction, ramps will be unavailable to pedestrians and alternative ADA accessible pedestrian ramps will be designated for use. Up to six ramps will be worked on at a time.

A virtual open house is available until July 22 on the ODOT website, where maps of exact locations for each city are available and the public can submit comments.

DAILY PLANNER

TODAY

Today is Tuesday, June 30, the 182nd day of 2020. There are 184 days left in the year.

TODAY'S HIGHLIGHT

On June 30, 1971, the Supreme Court ruled, 6-3, that the government could not prevent The New York Times or The Washington Post from publishing the Pentagon Papers.

ON THIS DATE

In 1865, eight people, including Mary Surratt and Dr. Samuel Mudd, were convicted by a military commission of conspiring with John Wilkes Booth, the assassin of President Abraham Lincoln. (Four defendants, including Surratt, were executed; Mudd was sentenced to life in prison, but was pardoned by President Andrew Johnson in 1869.)

In 1918, labor activist and socialist Eugene V. Debs was arrested in Cleveland, charged under the Espionage Act of 1917 for a speech he'd made two weeks earlier denouncing U.S. involvement in World War I. (Debs was sentenced to prison and disenfranchised for life.)

In 1934, Adolf Hitler launched his "blood purge" of political and military rivals in Germany in what came to be known as "The Night of the Long Knives."

In 1958, the U.S. Senate passed the Alaska statehood bill by a vote of 64-20.

In 1963, Pope Paul VI was crowned the 262nd head of the Roman Catholic Church.

In 1971, a Soviet space mission ended in tragedy when three cosmonauts aboard Soyuz 11 were found dead of asphyxiation inside their capsule after it had returned to Earth.

In 1982, the proposed Equal Rights Amendment to the U.S. Constitution expired, having failed to receive the required number of ratifications for its adoption, despite having its seven-year deadline extended by three years.

In 1986, the Supreme Court, in Bowers v. Hardwick, ruled 5-4 that states could outlaw homosexual acts between consenting adults (however, the nation's highest court effectively reversed this decision in 2003 in Lawrence v. Texas).

In 1994, the U.S. Figure Skating Association stripped Tonya Harding of the national championship and banned her for life for her role in the attack on rival Nancy Kerrigan.

In 1997, the Union Jack was lowered for the last time over Government House in Hong Kong as Britain prepared to hand the colony back to China at midnight after ruling it for 156 years.

In 2009, American soldier Pfc. Bowe R. Bergdahl went missing from his base in eastern Afghanistan, and was later confirmed to have been captured by insurgents. (Bergdahl was released on May 31, 2014 in exchange for five Taliban detainees.)

In 2013, 19 elite firefighters known as members of the Granite Mountain Hotshots were killed battling a wildfire northwest of Phoenix after a change in wind direction pushed the flames back toward their position.

LOTTERY

Megabucks: $3.2 million
9-22-26-33-44-45
Mega Millions: $44 million
19-33-37-56-57—6 x2
Powerball: $42 million
9-36-49-56-62—PB-8 x2
Win for Life: June 27
8-33-60-64
Pick 4: June 28
- **1 p.m.:** 2-4-6-0
- **4 p.m.:** 7-0-3-2
- **7 p.m.:** 7-3-9-1
- **10 p.m.:** 5-6-7-6

Pick 4: June 27
- **1 p.m.:** 2-4-8-5
- **4 p.m.:** 9-7-4-7
- **7 p.m.:** 9-0-3-8
- **10 p.m.:** 4-9-3-0

Pick 4: June 26
- **1 p.m.:** 2-7-5-7
- **4 p.m.:** 2-9-6-3
- **7 p.m.:** 2-4-2-5
- **10 p.m.:** 9-4-1-4

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