



THE OBSERVER

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Contributed photo
Cook Memorial Library employee Celine Vandervlugt installs one of the pages Tuesday, Aug. 4, on the new StoryWalk at Riverside Park, La Grande.

Permanent Storywalk features local author

By Sabrina Thompson
The Observer

LA GRANDE — The latest feature at La Grande’s Riverside Park highlights works from local authors.

The city’s Parks and Recreation Department teamed up with Cook Memorial Library to create a permanent StoryWalk along the walking trail at the park.

“It’s a great way to combine literacy, family engagement, health and exploring our community,” said Carrie Bushman, the library’s director of children’s services.

A StoryWalk displays separate pages of a book along a walking trail, bike path or other routes as a way to simultaneously promote reading and exercise. La Grande’s StoryWalk will feature 20 posts for pages along the path. The library frequently will change the book on display to encourage people to return and see what’s new to read.

City Parks and Recreation Director Stu Spence said he was excited when library staff approached him with the proposal.

“I immediately thought the Riverside Park greenway would be a great fit for the project since many families are already playing at the park and it would encourage them to explore the trail,” he said. “I’m excited to hear the reaction of the community.”

Previously, Cook Memorial Library put up temporary

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Staff photo by Sabrina Thompson
The Hines Meat Co. in La Grande received a \$69,708 grant from the city’s Urban Renewal Agency to help the business fund its expansion. Three other businesses also received grants from the agency.

BUSINESS BOOSTS

URA grants will fund upgrades, renovations

By Sabrina Thompson
The Observer

LA GRANDE — The city of La Grande’s Urban Renewal Agency recently awarded grants totaling \$185,780 to four local businesses for renovations and upgrades.

“In the challenging time we are in right now, I respect and appreciate our small businesses that are continuing to grow within our city,” Mayor Steve Clements said in a press release. “The Urban Renewal grant programs continue to be a way to help businesses expand and make improvements they might not otherwise be able to do on their own.”

Hines Meat Company, Raul’s Taqueria and Flavors, Dry Creek Capital, and Jim and Connie Voelz received the funding boost.

Hines Meat Company – 2315 Jefferson Ave.

The Urban Renewal Agency awarded \$69,708 to Hines Meat Company, covering a portion

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Staff photo by Sabrina Thompson
Raul’s Taqueria and Flavors is one of four La Grande businesses to receive a grant from the city’s Urban Renewal Agency. The \$21,072 grant will help the Adams Avenue eatery expand into adjacent space.

La Grande Urban Renewal grants 2020-21	
Dry Creek Capital (Slater Building) —	\$75,000
Hines Meat Company —	\$69,708
Raul’s Taqueria and Flavors —	\$21,072
Jim and Connie Voelz property —	\$20,000

EOU founding member announces retirement

Colleagues reflect on David Nelson’s years of service

The Observer

LA GRANDE — After five years as chair of the Eastern Oregon University Board of Trustees, and following decades of public service, David Nelson will retire next week.

Nelson, 79, was appointed to be a founding member of EOU’s independent governing board when it was established in 2015. He said he’s proud of what the fledgling board has achieved in such a short time.

“We were in a very difficult situation when the board came on — no reserve funds, essentially on probation from the state commission, looking for a president,” he said. “Now in five years, we’ve got new full-time deans, pay and benefits have improved across



Photo contributed by Eastern Oregon University/East Oregonian
David Nelson during a EOU Foundation event in January 2018. A founding member of Eastern Oregon University’s independent governing board when it was established in 2015, Nelson will retire next week.

campus, and there are new programs coming on.”

He also said the best thing the EOU Board of Trustees did was hire Tom Insko as president in 2015. He credited Insko with

doing much to strengthen Eastern’s financial position. Nelson said EOU and Oregon State University are now in better financial condition than any of the other state universities in Oregon.

COVID-19 Case drop needed for schools to reopen

In the past three weeks, only Wheeler County would meet state COVID-19 standards for in-person teaching

By Ronald Bond
The Observer

LA GRANDE — Data from the Oregon Health Authority indicates it could be a while before Oregon students are back in a school buildings under the recent coronavirus standards.

The Oregon Health Authority has begun posting weekly positive COVID-19 test percentages and cases per 100,000 individuals for each county in Oregon. The data show the state last week posted its highest positive rate in 4-1/2 months at 6.1%. One of the metrics Gov. Kate Brown put in place July 28 requires the statewide percentage to be at or below 5% three weeks in a row, meaning Oregon enters the month of August already needing to pull down that number.

Even if the state hit the range, most counties are not yet in a place to reopen classrooms because they are outside their requirements — 10 cases or fewer per 100,000 people and a 5% or lower positive rate in a week for three straight weeks.

In the last three weeks, from July 12 to Aug. 1, only Wheeler County — which has not had a case of COVID-19 during the pandemic — would qualify. Every other county in Oregon has had enough cases to break that 10 per 100,000 ratio in just the last two weeks.

This even includes Grant County, which has had just two cases through the duration of the pandemic. The county had its second case during the week of July 19, but with a population of

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WEATHER

Full forecast on the back of B section

	Tonight 45 LOW Clear and cooler		Friday 78/48 Sunny and nice
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CONTACT US

541-963-3161	Email story ideas to news@lagrandeobserver.com . More contact info on Page 4A.
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