

GRANTS

Continued from Page 1A

of the company’s \$211,761 project.

The project will give the butcher shop and meat market that opened in 2016 the funding to build a new cooler room, spice room and smoker area and acquire equipment. Further, the grant allows Hines Meat to hire five new staff members to meet production and distribution demands. The new elements also will help the company achieve USDA certification.

“This project will help us create quality family-wage jobs,” Paige Hines, co-owner of Hines Meat Company, said. “The gift of Urban Renewal dollars, our tax money, is not lost on us and we hope that blessing circles back to our community and beyond. We are so excited and thankful.”

Raul’s Taqueria and Flavors — 1302-1304 Adams Ave.

The Mexican eatery on Adams Avenue will expand into the adjacent retail space to offer more customer dining space, a



Staff photo by Sabrina Thompson

Owners of the apartments at the Slater Building, 212-214 Fir St., received a \$75,000 grant from the city’s Urban Renewal Agency to help cover the cost of updates and renovations.

full-service bar and electronic gaming.

“It means a lot to have this grant,” co-owner Arturo Escamilla said. “It is going to help with all of the improvements we are making.

The project costs \$42,143 and the company received \$21,072 in grant funding. Additional improvements include installation of more plumbing, renovations to the building’s facade, new signage and hiring four new employees.

“This expansion is something we’ve wanted to do for a long time,” Escamilla

said. “The store is too small sometimes for our customers, and with the extension we can offer more and sell more drinks, provide our customers with more options.”

Dry Creek Capital — 212-214 Fir St.

Mike and Laura Sattem of Dry Creek Capital submitted the largest project proposal, estimating they need around \$345,506 to complete interior and exterior renovations of the newly acquired Slater Building, one of the five



Staff Photo by Sabrina Thompson

Jim and Connie Voelz will update their property at 1701 Adams Ave., La Grande, with help from a \$20,000 grant from the city’s Urban Renewal Agency grant, one of four the agency recently approved.

buildings in La Grande on the National Historic Register. The URA awarded the project \$75,000 to offset the costs. In his proposal, Mike Sattem said the building has remained unchanged over the last 130 years.

“As one of the largest buildings by square footage (in the downtown), updating key systems has proven to be too costly for most private owners,” Sattem stated in the proposal. “Restoring the building with new mechanical systems will help to ensure the building’s safety and lifespan for another

50 years. Urban Renewal funds will help to offset the increased costs associated with this building’s one of a kind architectural features and design.”

In addition, the proposal continues, restoring the historic storefronts along Fir Street would continue to grow the commercial district resulting from the new railroad quiet zone.

The project includes replacing all electrical, HVAC and plumbing systems in the 10-12 apartments as well as the historical restoration of the facade of the building.

Jim and Connie Voelz property — 1701 Adams Ave.

The Urban Renewal Agency considers the Adams Avenue and Island City Avenue intersection as one of the gateways into downtown La Grande, according to a press release from the city. To help with making the entrance more inviting and to assist a local business, the Urban Renewal Agency granted \$20,000 to Jim and Connie Voelz, owners of property on the southeast corner, for their renovation project.

Improvements at 1701 Adams Adams Ave. will include planting trees and shrubs, resurfacing the parking lot and putting in a new fire door and roof over the entryway. Connie Voelz said she would like to set up a flag pole and bench for people to enjoy as they pass by.

“That corner was getting to be a real eyesore and there isn’t much you can do with all the concrete, but we wanted to try and add something nice to the corner,” she said. “The grant funding means we can do more than we planned to at the start.”

SCHOOLS

Continued from Page 1A

7,360, according to data used by OHA, that one case pushes it over the threshold.

Even Union County’s three cases last week count as a failure under the new standard, as that puts the county at 11.2 cases per 100,000 people, according to the OHA’s update.

Exemption allows counties to open classrooms for kindergarten through third grade or for districts with 100 or fewer students. Counties can do so if they have less than 30 cases per 100,000 individuals as long as spread is not among students. Locally, Union County would have to stay at eight or fewer cases a week to be within this metric. Baker County would have to be at five, and Wallowa County could have only two cases.

Counties that would be able to open to kindergarten through third grade under the provision include Grant, Tillamook, Linn, Lincoln, Lane, Josephine, Douglas, Curry, Coos, Columbia and Benton. Union and Wallowa counties could in theory be a week away from reaching that barrier, and Harney, Klamath and Lake could with two more good weeks. A handful of small districts also could potentially open.

But even if schools are able to reopen later this fall, many counties would need to maintain near perfection to continue teaching in person.

The rules from OHA state if a county has 30 cases per 100,000 people during a week, it is required to move back to distance learning. Oregon’s three smallest counties in population — Sherman, Gilliam and Wheeler — all would transgress that rule with one new case.

Wallowa, Harney, Grant and Lake — all of which

have 7,000-8,000 people — would be forced into distance learning with three cases in a week. Union County would be sent out of the classroom if there were nine cases in a week, and Baker County would strike out at six cases in a week.

In the last week, several counties exceeded in a single day the weekly number needed to stay open. As an example, Umatilla County on Monday had 64 cases — close to triple the 24 it must stay at or under for a week in order to open classrooms. Morrow County had eight on Sunday, more than double its allowed threshold for a week. Malheur County had 10 on Sunday, which would force schools to closed if they had reopened.

And while the regulations do not include a state mandate for this number, the number of cases statewide gives a good reference for how far Oregon schools may be from reopening. The state would need to be at about 424 cases a week — roughly 60 per day — to be cleared to reopen, and triple that — 180 per day — to stay open.

July 6 was the last time Oregon was under 180 cases in a day when it posted 168. The last day with fewer than 60 was June 2 when it had 33 cases.

Just breaking under the 5% statewide positivity rate could be a challenge in the weeks ahead, as the rate has been hit just once in the past five weeks. During that time, the state has processed an average of 36,226.4 test results. To get to 5%, there could be only 1,811.32 positives per week, or less than 259 a day, and that metric would need to be satisfied three weeks in a row.

That would be accomplishing a feat that hasn’t been met since mid- to late-June.

STORYWALK

Continued from Page 1A

Storywalk exhibits outside its building in downtown La Grande. The Riverside Park Storywalk will be permanent and display a variety of authors. The first pages on display are from “My Octopus Arms” by local artist Keith Baker, a children’s book about all you can do with your hands and arms.

NELSON

Continued from Page 1A

Nelson leaves with the respect of his fellow board members.

“Whether he is participating in a one-on-one friendly discussion or chairing a meeting of the EOU Trustee Board, David is respectful, caring and attentive,” Trustee Richard Chaves said. “He has the ability to work through sensitive discussions and situations, bringing them gracefully to resolution. I am honored to know David and call him friend.”

Former EOU interim president Dixie Lund, also a member of the board of trustees, said she has learned by listening to and observing Nelson’s style of leadership.

“He’s also become a very good friend, who I will greatly miss when he steps down from the board. He makes sure all opinions are voiced, but is also perceptive when a speaker tends to monopolize, ‘get into the weeds,’ or speak on a personal agenda rather than on what’s best for the university,” she said.

Baker wrote and illustrated the book for children ages 2-5. Because it is the inaugural book for the project, Baker’s book will remain up a little longer than future displays.

Bushman said she is eager to see how the StoryWalk project is received by the community.

“I think it is really sweet to share a book that way,” Baker said. “I am really curious to see how that all works. I grew up

in La Grande, and my parents lived near the library, and we were great library patrons. I am sure that had a huge influence.”

Bushman led the project on the library’s end. She said she remembered how people enjoyed the temporary StoryWalk in 2014 and liked the idea of a permanent installation.

“This is a great time for it,” Bushman said. “I wanted to this before

COVID came out, and now that COVID happened it is a good thing to (get outside and do).”

The cost for the project is around \$6,200, and funding comes from grants and sponsorships. Community members can sponsor a book for \$40, or one of the five remaining unsponsored posts for \$300. A plaque with the sponsors’ names will be on display along the StoryWalk.

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Grande Ronde Hospital and Clinics proudly welcomes: Steven Pinther, DO

To the GRH Specialty Clinic team as an ENT/Otolaryngologist

Dr. Steven Pinther joins the GRH Specialty Clinic from Ascension St. John Macomb in Oakland, Michigan, where he completed his Otolaryngology and Facial Plastic residency, and worked as an adjunct clinical faculty member at Michigan State University. He is a graduate of the Pacific Northwest University of Health Sciences College of Osteopathic Medicine. Dr. Pinther enjoys all aspects of general ear, nose, and throat (ENT) care, but has particular interests in sinonasal and ear conditions. In his free time, he enjoys spending time with his family participating in outdoor activities such as mountain biking, hunting, fishing, camping, and gardening. He also enjoys woodworking and working on old cars. Join us in welcoming otolaryngologist/ENT and osteopathic physician Steven Pinther to the Grande Ronde Valley. Call for an appointment today!



Steven Pinther, DO

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