

Small-business & Ag HAPPENINGS

EO Media Group

Training funds available for businesses

LA GRANDE — The Eastern Oregon Workforce Board announced this week the Training & Employment Consortium has funds to help Eastern Oregon companies retrain employees. The funds are available to companies in Baker, Grant, Harney, Malheur, Morrow, Umatilla, Union and Wallowa counties.

The training could include education in new or advanced skills that enable an employee to multitask or be more productive.

The purpose of the Incumbent Worker Training Program is to assist employers in training workers so they and the business can remain competitive, according to the Workforce Board’s press release. Priority for funding goes to applicants who demonstrate the funding could assist the business in avoiding a layoff, downsizing or closure or would provide retention opportunities.

For more information, contact Tara Bishop at 541-377-6209 or tbishop@tec-team.org.

Former Pendleton resident to lead Oregon Cattlemen’s Association

SALEM — After several weeks of a competitive interview process, the leadership and hiring committee of the Oregon Cattlemen’s Association has hired a former Umatilla County resident as its new executive director.

Tammy Dennee will officially begin her role Oct. 1.



Dennee

“I believe Tammy is an exceptionally qualified person for this position. The hiring committee was impressed with her extensive experience working in the Capitol on agricultural issues and her thorough involvement and passion for Oregon’s rural way of life,” said OCA’s President Tom Sharp. “I have complete confidence Tammy will do great work on behalf of our mission and membership.”

Dennee, a lifelong Oregonian, was born in Hood River. She lived in Pendleton for 20 years, then moved to Dallas in the Willamette Valley, where she and her husband, Michael, have resided for the past six years. Dennee has spent her professional career serving the agricultural and natural resource sectors. For many years she worked in the wheat industry and for the past five years she has been employed with the Oregon Dairy Farmers Association.

Dennee brings her experience as an association executive and legislative director to the cattlemen’s association.

A longtime member of the Oregon Agriculture in the Classroom Foundation Board of Directors, Dennee has served on numerous boards of directors, including the Pendleton Round-Up. Dennee and her husband return every year to volunteer at the Pendleton Round-Up and Happy Canyon.

Longtime clinic gets new name

ENTERPRISE — Mountain View Medical Group, with a clinic in Enterprise and a new location opening spring of 2021 in Joseph, is changing its name to Wallowa Memorial Medical Clinic effective immediately.

Wallowa Mountain Medical joined the Wallowa County Health Care District in 2015 to form Mountain View Medical Group. More than five years later, there is still confusion in the community about the clinic’s affiliation with the hospital.

“If you see one of our providers in our clinic, your bill will come from Wallowa Memorial Hospital,” said Michelle Gardner, clinic director. “Obviously, this creates some confusion. By changing the name, we create a clear and direct association with the hospital.”

Some of the features and benefits of the new facility will be a modern space that is both ADA and HIPAA compliant, a minor-procedures room, improved access and parking, capacity to host educational and health care-related meetings and a teaching kitchen.

New health insurer enters market

PORTLAND — The health insurance market in Eastern Oregon has a new competitor: Summit Health.

A group of regional health care providers created Summit Health to meet the needs of Eastern Oregonians, according to a press release from the new company.

“Summit Health is homegrown, community-based health care designed to meet folks’ needs where they live and with providers they know and trust,” said Sean Jessup, president of Summit Health, in the press release.

The company’s founders consists of the following: Good Shepherd Health Care System, Grande Ronde Hospital and Clinics, Saint Alphonsus Health System, GOBHI, CHI St. Anthony Hospital, Eastern Oregon IPA, Yakima Valley Farm Workers Clinic and Moda.

Oregon job recovery slows in July

EO Media Group

SALEM — Oregon’s total nonfarm payroll employment rose by 20,500 jobs in July, following a gain of 57,000 jobs in June, according to the latest report from the Oregon Employment Department.

Over the past three months, employers added back 38% of the jobs that were cut in March and April. Over-the-month job gains in July were largest in leisure and hospitality (7,300 jobs), government (5,700), retail trade (3,600), health care and social assistance (3,100) and professional and business services (1,900).

Meanwhile, three of the state’s major industries cut a substantial number of jobs in July: construction lost 1,900, manufacturing went down 1,500 and information dropped 1,200.

The pandemic during the past five months hit major industries in different ways.

Leisure and hospitality suffered far the largest job loss during March and April, shedding 118,700 jobs during the outset of the pandemic-induced drop in business. Then, between April and July, the industry regained half of the loss, as it rebounded by 58,900 jobs.

Three industries regained more than half of their lost jobs. Health care and social assistance regained two-thirds of its lost jobs, with a rebound of 18,700 jobs during the past three months. Two industries in that span regained nearly two-thirds of their lost jobs: other services added 9,300 jobs, or a 63% rebound, and

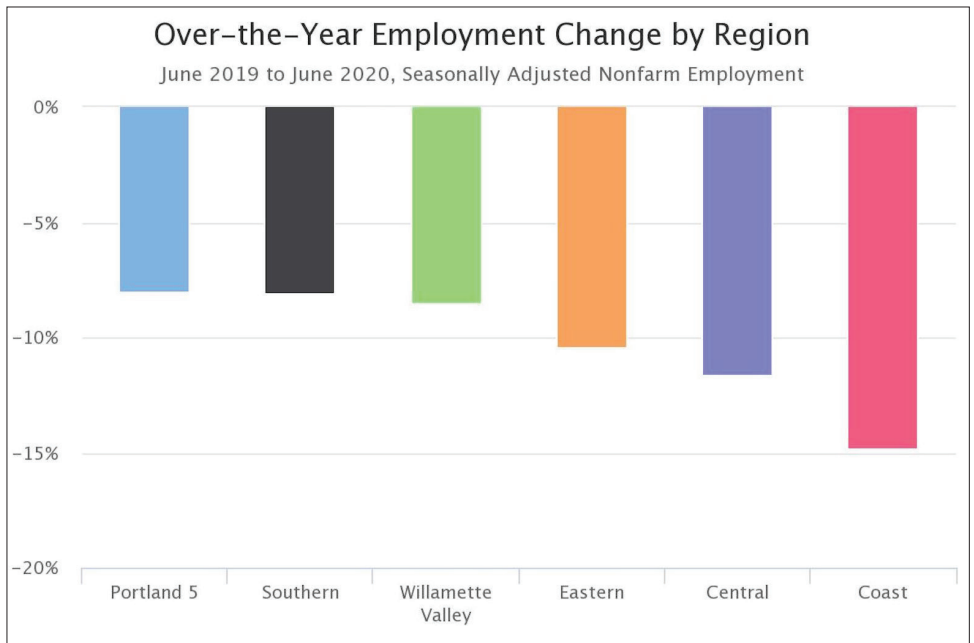


Chart by Oregon Employment Department

Oregon current employment statistics according to the Oregon Employment Department.

retail trade added 13,900 jobs, or 62%.

However, several key industries that experienced substantial job losses in March and April have not rebounded substantially or have even declined further. The following industries shed jobs between April and July: government lost 5,200 jobs, manufacturing dropped 3,100 and information is down 1,900.

Most of the other major industries have regained fewer than 5,000 jobs each of

the past three months while regaining less than one-third of jobs lost during March and April. These industries include construction, financial activities transportation, warehousing and utilities.

Oregon’s unemployment rate dropped to 10.4% in July from 11.6% as revised in June. In July, Oregon’s unemployment rate was close to the U.S. unemployment rate; the U.S. rated dropped to 10.2% in July from 11.1% in June.

EOU’s new chairman brings business experience to role

By Sabrina Thompson

EO Media Group

LA GRANDE — Eastern Oregon University selected Richard Chaves as the new chairman of the board of trustees through November 2021. Chaves brings experience as a member of the board for five years and as a business owner for 36 years.

“My career and how I got to where I am started at EOU,” Chaves said.

Chaves graduated from Eastern Oregon University in 1973 with a degree in business economics and management.

He said he knew he wanted to stay in Northeast Oregon after college but wasn’t sure how until he saw a post at the university’s career services.

“Back then it was just a bulletin board with papers and Post-it notes,” Chaves said. “At the time there was only one post. It was for writing grants for law enforcement. I didn’t have any experience with law enforcement or grant writing but EOU gave me the confidence to apply for that job and I got it.”

Chaves went on to start his own company in 1984, Chaves Consulting Inc., where he specialized in creating computer software for government agencies.

The company focuses more on the customer service end now, but Chaves said the skills he has learned and the culture he has created will translate to his new role as the chairman of the board of trustees.

“Owning my own business has prepared me from a financial perspective for sure,” Chaves said. “While EOU is not a for-profit business, in a lot of ways it is run like a business. Our job is to give the best deal to our clients — the students — and take care of our employees — the faculty and staff.”

Chaves said the mission of his business aligns directly with his plans and hopes as chairman. Having his own business also taught him about building relationships with people, something he plans to bring on as chairman of the board.

“University campuses are a place for free thinking and thoughtful consideration, which is different from a private business where you can just make your own decision,” Chaves said. “Part of my job is to see we stay at the right level of governance, are always listening and representing the university. The job of the chair and the board is to help make major decisions with recommendations.”

While he has come prepared with years of experience, Chaves said he still has more to learn to understand the inner workings of EOU, something he is excited to do.



Chaves



Photo by Sean McKeag/The Citizens’ Voice via AP

The Federal Reserve says the pandemic has disrupted the supply system for coins. While there are enough coins out in the world, they are not circulating as freely.

Coin shortage hits retailers, laundromats, tooth fairy

By Sarah Skidmore Sell

AP Personal Finance Writer

WASHINGTON — A convenience store chain is offering a free beverage or sandwich in exchange for them. A laundromat owner drove 4 hours across state lines to get \$8,000 worth. A young girl in Illinois wrote the tooth fairy saying she’ll gladly take dollars as a substitute if it helps.

There is a shortage of coins across the United States, yet another odd side effect of the coronavirus pandemic. Quarters, dimes and nickels aren’t circulating as freely as they usually do because many businesses have been closed and consumers aren’t out spending as much.

The Federal Reserve announced in June the supply system for coins had been severely disrupted. The U.S. Mint and Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin have urged Americans to use coins or turn them in to banks. As the economy recovers and businesses reopen, the coin supply is expected to normalize.

Meanwhile, retailers large and small have urged shoppers to use cards or exact change whenever possible. Some won’t provide change. Grocery giant Kroger Co. still accepts cash but offers customers the option to load their change onto loyalty cards to use on their next visit or to donate the balance to charity.

As the shortage persists,

it’s become clear there are some conundrums that only coins can solve.

“It’s at the minimum an inconvenience...at worst it’s a business challenge,” said Brian Wallace, CEO of the Coin Laundry Association, a trade group for laundromats.

About 56% of laundromats that serve the public take quarters as the only form of payment. And 89% take quarters as some form of payment, with cards, loyalty programs or mobile payments as an alternative, according to the trade group.

Laundromats rely heavily on coins, in part, because many of their customers are “unbanked” or “underbanked,” meaning they mostly or entirely use cash instead of cards to pay for things.

People who rely on coin-operated laundry machines in laundromats and apartment buildings are struggling as well. Stephanie Sabin of Portland has a washing machine at her apartment complex that takes only quarters. In July, her neighborhood bank was closed for in-person business.

The next five locations she tried were either closed or unable to give her quarters. She’s been able to get her laundry done with quarters her family had on hand or that she bought from her boss.

“Desperate times,” she said. “You can no longer request rolls of quarters at grocery stores or even

get change back if you pay with cash at a food drive-thru.”

Toll booths, parking meters, vending machines and other spots that were once coin-heavy have largely modernized to accept other forms of payment.

For the North Carolina Aquarium at Pine Knoll Shores, a shutdown in March turned into an unexpected opportunity to help offset lost revenue and ended up helping address the coin shortage too.

The aquarium shut down its waterfall and cleared out about 100 gallons of coins visitors had thrown in over the past 14 years. The coins, which still are being washed and counted, will go toward operating costs.

“We are definitely feeling the pinch,” said Danielle Bolton, a spokeswoman for the aquarium. “Every penny counts, literally.”

The shortage is even being felt by the young.

The 10-year-old daughter of Jen Vicker, of Bollingbrook, Illinois, woke up with a loose tooth recently and worried the tooth fairy wouldn’t be able to pay because of the shortage.

So she wrote a note: “Dear tooth fairy, you may already know this but there is a national coin shortage in America. You usually leave me dollar coins, but until this situation is resolved, I would like cash for my teeth. I apologize for the inconvenience.”