

COMMUNITY

Briefs

Parks & Rec expands after-school hours for Thanksgiving week

LA GRANDE — The city of La Grande's Park and Rec Department's after school program is offering extra hours the week of Thanksgiving, due to schools being closed for the holiday.

An extra day has been added to the week of Nov. 23-25.

Hours on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday will be 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. (early drop-off offered at 7:45 a.m.). Cost is \$84 per child. Meals are not provided, so please send your child with a lunch.

Spots are limited and pre-registration is required. Register at <https://lagrande-parks.org/program/31636/parks-and-rec-extended-after-school-child-care-fall-2020>. For more information, contact McKayla Rollins, recreation supervisor, at 541-962-1352 or mrollins@cityoflagrande.org.

Rimfire silhouette shoots offered on first Sunday of the month

LA GRANDE — Beginning Dec. 6, the La Grande Rifle and Pistol Club will be hosting a .22 rimfire silhouette shoot every first Sunday of the month through April at the club's river range on Highway 244 (I-84 exit 252, then 3 miles west on the Ukiah-Hilgard Highway). The monthly events are open to the public and begin at 9 a.m.

Entry fee is \$5. Eye and ear protection is required. Rifles or pistols, with no restrictions on sights. For more information, call Gary at 541-786-0809, go to www.lgrpc.com or visit the club's Facebook page.

Menus

Union County Senior Center takeout lunch menu

Pick up 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. at 1504 N. Albany St., La Grande. For delivery, call 541-963-7532 before 10 a.m. Age 60+, \$3 suggested donation; all others, \$5. Public is welcome. Inquire about family meals and prepackaged sides.

NOV. 23-27

Monday: chicken tenders, potato salad, cucumber salad, fresh fruit, dessert.

Tuesday: fish & chips, coleslaw, baked beans, fresh fruit, dessert.

Wednesday: Thanksgiving dinner: turkey, mashed potatoes & gravy, dressing, cranberry sauce, green beans, rolls, pie.

Thursday & Friday: closed for Thanksgiving.

Tommy G. West

1935-2020 • Formerly of La Grande

Tommy Gerald West, 85, formerly of La Grande, died Nov. 10 at his residence in Albuquerque, New Mexico. A memorial graveside service will be held in the spring of 2021 at Mt. Hope Cemetery in Baker City.

Tommy was born June 13, 1935, in Sudan, Texas, to Roy and Thelma (Tate) West. He graduated from Sudan High School.

After high school, Tommy joined the U.S. Army and served for five years before separation at the rank of specialist. His time on active duty included 16 months in Korea. He spent the next 30 years working as a highway engineer for the Oregon Department of Transportation, retiring in 1995.



In 1960, Tommy married Carol J. Williams in El Paso, Texas. They had two sons together, Brian and Tracey. Tommy lived in La Grande for 47 years, only recently moving to Albuquerque to live with his son Brian.

Tommy was a VFW lifetime member. He enjoyed bingo at the Union County Senior Center in La Grande and Wildhorse as well as playing slot machine games on his tablet. He also enjoyed doing crossword puzzles and word jumbles from the newspaper.

Surviving relatives include his sons and daughters-in-law, Brian and Dawn West of Albuquerque, New Mexico, and Tracey and Nancy West of Redding, California; brother and sister-in-law, Gary and Gale West of Denver, Colorado; and five grandchildren and nine great-grandchildren.

He was preceded in death by his wife, Carol West.

Highlighting the missing and murdered

Sabrina Thompson/The Observer

Red dresses hang from trees at Eastern Oregon University on Monday, Nov. 16, 2020, to raise awareness about murdered and missing indigenous women and children. Members of the Native American Program at the La Grande university put the dresses on display as part of Native American Heritage Month. The dresses will remain hanging until the end of November.

OBITUARIES

To leave an online condolence for the family, go to www.coletributecenter.com.

Harris W. Shelton Jr.

1943-2020 • Formerly of La Grande

Dr. Harris White Shelton Jr., 77, of Buckley, Washington, and formerly of La Grande, died Nov. 10 in Tacoma, Washington.

Harris was born July 1, 1943, in Saint Austin, Texas, to Harris White Sr. and Ruth (O'Leary) Shelton. His name at birth was Jerry, which was changed to Harris at 6 months of age when his father was killed in World War II. His mother, Ruth, later married James Pope, who raised him.

Harris earned a BA from the University of Florida, a MA from the University of South Florida and a PhD from Florida State. In 1971, he accepted a position at the

University of Alaska, Fairbanks, as assistant dean of students, becoming dean of students in 1974 and retiring as vice chancellor, emeritus of student affairs in 1992.

In 1999 Harris moved to La Grande to become vice president for student affairs at Eastern Oregon University until his second retirement in 2003.

On May 19, 2002, Harris married Mary-Ellen LaBerge. In July 2016 they moved to Buckley, Washington.

Harris loved baseball and the Tampa Bay Rays. He played one year in the minor leagues for the Pirates organization and then was assistant coach for baseball in college for the Florida Gators. Harris coached youth league baseball and hockey, served as president of the Fairbanks Youth Hockey Association and served on the Goldpanners board of directors. He was active in

UAF Nanooks Hockey and was inducted to the UAF Athletic Hall of Fame in 2010.

Harris also loved playing golf, telling stories, laughing and loving people. He was a member of the Kiwanis and the Elks, both in Alaska and La Grande, and was a past exalted ruler. He was a member of Rotary and volunteered for Meals on Wheels.

Surviving relatives include his wife, Mary-Ellen; children, Kristin and Patrick; stepchildren, Becky, Brad and Allan Warren; and nine grandchildren.

Memorial contributions may be made to a local charity of choice.

Patricia A. Madsen

La Grande

Patricia A. Madsen, 86, of La Grande, died Nov. 19 at a local care facility. Arrangements are by Loveland Funeral Chapel & Crematory, La Grande.

PUBLIC SAFETY REPORT

WEDNESDAY, NOV. 18

5:10 a.m. — A caller reported a suspicious person on the 800 block of Adams Avenue, La Grande. Police responded but did not find anyone suspicious.

1:01 p.m. — The Union County Sheriff's Office received a report of a recent burglary at Buffalo Peak Golf Course, 1224 E. Fulton St., Union. A deputy took information and will follow up.

3:26 p.m. — La Grande police received a report of a possible sex crime.

6:54 p.m. — An Elgin resident reported the theft of an iPhone. A Union

County sheriff's deputy responded, retrieved the phone and returned it to the owner.

THURSDAY, NOV. 19

6:48 a.m. — La Grande police on the 800 block of Jefferson Avenue arrested a 14-year-old male for second-degree theft and unauthorized entry into a motor vehicle.

9:58 a.m. — La Grande police received a report from Second Street of animal abuse. The animal enforcement officer responded and took information.

10:25 a.m. — The Union County Sheriff's Office responded to the

900 block of North First Street, Union, on a report of a burglary in progress. Deputies arrived and found new homeowners were moving in.

5:33 p.m. — La Grande police received a report of a disturbance at Max Square. Police arrived, determined this was an argument and separated the parties.

8:45 p.m. — La Grande police received a request for contact regarding suspicious circumstances on the 2300 block of Q Avenue. An officer made contact and determined a subject was suffering from mental illness.

BIRTHS

GRANDE RONDE HOSPITAL

BALTENSBERGER: To Casey Brown and Andy Baltensperger, of La Grande, a son, Kit Andrew Baltensperger, Nov. 3 at 8:57 p.m. Grandparents are Cari Riedlin, Kit Brown, and Brad and Vickie Baltensperger.

JOHNSON: To Mandy Johnson and Cole Johnson, of La Grande, a daughter, Harper Rose Johnson, Nov. 5 at 5:05 p.m.

KING: To Kayla Ann Hansen and Robert Lee King, of La Grande, a son,

Bohdi King, Oct. 28 at 8:20 a.m. Grandparents are Shelia and Will Evans, April and Jason King, and Judy and Steve Morton.

LAURICELLA: To Rachele Gorham and Wayne Lauricella, of Elgin, a son, Camdyn Lane Lauricella, Nov. 4 at 8:15 a.m.

LAYTON: To Angela Marie Willison and Eric Evan Layton, of La Grande, a son, Everett Layton, Oct. 18 at 2:48 a.m.

CHANGE

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officials in designing strategies to combat the spread of COVID-19.

During the spring, he noted, the state required counties to submit detailed plans for approval before moving into Phase 1, which relaxed some of the restrictions on businesses, church services and other activities the governor imposed in March at the outset of the pandemic.

That approach "is totally ignored now," he contended, and rather than planning that acknowledges the different effects the virus has had in rural Oregon, state officials switched to a "one-size-fits-all" strategy — including the two-week statewide freeze in effect from Nov. 18 through Dec. 2.

He conceded one reference in the letter about rural communities slowing the spread of COVID-19 has been overtaken by subsequent trends in new cases.

"Clearly the situation seems to continue to escalate, and the numbers in most of the (legislative) districts are pretty darn high, which is unfortunate," he said.

Nonetheless, Findley stood by his belief that statewide restrictions such as the two-week freeze fail to reflect the differences between rural and urban areas.

Wheeler County, for instance, has reported only one COVID-19 case during the pandemic. Three other counties in Findley's district have had fewer than 100 cases — Lake, with 82

cases as of Thursday, Nov. 19; Harney, with 78; and Grant, with 74.

Bobby Levy, the Republican representative-elect for Oregon House District 58, said she added her signature because she believes the individual differences of counties should be taken into account.

"Hospitalizations in the metro (area) shouldn't automatically mean that our rural communities suffer the consequences. Our children need to be in school full time. Our churches need to be open to attend. State business needs to open back up and serve the communities they have left behind," Levy said.

Levy signed the letter before the governor's freeze took effect and said on Thursday her feelings about the COVID-19 lockdown have not changed.

"We all are doing our best to help keep our communities safe and financially afloat — but shutting down businesses, schools and churches that have no correlation to outbreaks is not the answer. I want to make sure that HD58 and the rest of Oregon has a fighting chance to survive this pandemic. Physically, fiscally and mentally," Levy said.

Levy in January will succeed Barreto to state Rep. Greg Barreto, R-Cove. Barreto, who did not run for reelection, signed the letter for a fundamental reason.

"I read it and I agreed with it," he said.

The state representative said he objects to how the governor's mandates are "carte blanche" for all counties despite their differences. He described

Brown's measures as unnecessarily draconian. He said the governor should not be focusing on COVID-19 rates but rather at the number of hospitalizations and those requiring respirators.

Barreto also said rather than issuing strict orders, Brown should be asking people to take individual responsibility and providing guidelines for them to follow to reduce COVID-19 rates.

Seeking a seat at the table

Union County Commissioner Donna Beverage said the start of the freeze was the right time to send the letter.

She said all the Eastern Oregon counties want is a seat at the table when the state is determining actions to reduce COVID-19 rates. She said she believes county commissioners and local health department officials should be involved with discussions with the state.

"We all want to be safe and to make sure that we do not lose people to depression or suicide or have people lose businesses," Beverage said.

She said the governor's office in the past told Eastern Oregon officials what to do about COVID-19, but in recent days the governor's staff has become more receptive to the needs of Eastern Oregon counties.

"Now it is giving us a chance to give more input," said Beverage, who was reelected to a second-term in May.

Paul Anderes, chair of the Union County Board of Commissioners, said he hoped the letter opens lines

of communication between the governor's office and Eastern Oregon. Anderes, too, said he wants representatives of Eastern Oregon counties to be at the table with the governor's staff when considering what to do.

"We want them to let us in on decision making rather than having the state make decisions with a wide blanket," he said.

Anderes said he also senses Brown and her staff are beginning to listen more to Eastern Oregon officials, a change the first-term Union County commissioner said is encouraging.

Some wanted to move faster

Wallowa County Commissioner Todd Nash said many who signed the letter hoped to get it to the governor sooner.

"There were a number of us who wanted to send this letter some time ago, but felt like there was a decision made not to send it prior to the election and make it a political stand," Nash said.

He said he visited with the governor a little Wednesday night, Nov. 18.

"She's not ready, at this point, to drop the matrix and just have them be guidelines," he said. "She

still wants them to be enforceable."

Susan Roberts, the other Wallowa County commissioner to sign the letter, said she signed to encourage Brown to talk with local leaders rather than at them. She also said noted that decisions that would work for Wallowa County wouldn't necessarily work for Multnomah.

"We are different out here. We are never given the ability to make the decision (for ourselves)," Roberts said, adding that the pandemic is exacerbating the problem of Salem overlooking Eastern Oregon.

Pressing on to reach the governor

As for the meaning behind a more ominous statement in the letter — "the future of our state's survival is at risk" — Nash said it refers to businesses that could have to shutter for good and the "broad-reaching" impact of that move.

"If you shut down a restaurant, the high-end

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