



In Business

LG creative space grows



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Good day to our valued subscriber Karen Wells of La Grande

Shop with a Cop thrills LG children

By Dick Mason
The Observer

LA GRANDE — There is no stopping Shop with a Cop this year, at least not in La Grande. In spite of the COVID-19 pandemic, the program in which children get to shop with law enforcement officers for family Christmas presents — Shop with a Cop — remained strong in La Grande. Earlier this month 10 children went Christmas shopping with La Grande Police Department officers.

Their Shop with a Cop experience was a bit different, though, because of the pandemic. Previously, all Shop with a Cop participants met with law enforcement officers at Walmart in Island City to shop together. This year, due to health safety concerns, police officers went on individual shopping trips with children.

The boys and girls appeared to enjoy the experience at least as much as in years past, said La Grande police Lt. Jason Hays, coordinator of Shop with a Cop.

“One boy said it was the best day of his life,” Hays said.

The lieutenant said conducting the program is a joy for police officers.

“We deal with so much negativity, so the chance to spend a couple of hours with kids is wonderful,” Hays said.

Children were provided with \$150 to purchase gifts during their shopping spree. The experience was once again a role reversal for many children, who normally are the ones receiving gifts.

“It gives them a chance to be heroes for their families,” Hays said.

It is a role many enjoyed. This was evident when police officers reminded them they also were supposed to choose a present for themselves. Hays said some children seemed almost reluctant to do so because they were enjoying shopping for others so much.

In the past, the children and the officers they were with ate lunch at a restaurant after shopping. COVID-19 restrictions this year have shut down in-person dining, so each child got to order a takeout lunch at a favorite restaurant and then go to the La Grande Police Department to eat together. The chance to enjoy a meal at a police station appeared to be a thrill for the children.

“They loved it,” Hays said.

After eating, the children and officers spent about an hour wrapping the gifts.

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Christmas Star shines over the mountains



Jupiter, left, and Saturn draw near to each other to form a “Christmas star” as they set over Wallowa County’s Ruby Peak at about 5:45 p.m. on the winter solstice, Monday, Dec. 21, 2020.

Ellen Morris Bishop/For the Wallowa County Chieftain

Faith and face masks

Some faith organizations in Union County proceed with in-person holiday gatherings despite risk

By Kaleb Lay
The Observer

UNION COUNTY — While some faith organizations in Union County have foregone in-person services and gatherings around the Christmas holiday to avoid spreading COVID-19, others have forged ahead despite the risk.

In Island City, the Lighthouse Pentecostal Church plans to hold a three-day youth conference over the New Year holiday, raising concerns about COVID-19 transmission and the potential for another outbreak.

A June outbreak of COVID-19 was tied to Lighthouse Pentecostal, when at least 236 people were infected following several in-person events the church held. The outbreak set back Union County’s reopening at the time and the story garnered national news coverage.

Now, as the pandemic has reached its most severe stages across the state and nation, the faith group plans to convene a youth gathering dubbed “Avalanche 2020.”

Lighthouse Pentecostal declined multiple requests to comment and respond to questions about the event, its importance to their faith or what safety measures church leaders are implementing to prevent another outbreak.

In Facebook posts advertising the event, the church declared that a “youth hangout”

would take place after services with “food, gym and games.” Lighthouse Pentecostal also is selling Avalanche merchandise in its online store.

The Oregon Health Authority and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have warned people not to gather with

those outside their own household, and Oregon, California and Washington issued joint advisories against non-essential travel.

Lighthouse Pentecostal is not alone in

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Facebook screenshot

A screenshot from a video on Facebook of the Christian Life Center’s Christmas celebration shows the women’s choir gathering on stage. Around 100 people reportedly attended the service Sunday, Dec. 20, 2020, in Elgin.

Local legislators reflect on special session

By Jade McDowell
East Oregonian

SALEM — The Oregon Legislature’s third and final special session of the year was “definitely memorable,” said Rep. Greg Smith, R-Heppner.

As the legislature met inside the Capitol with masks and social distancing, protesters attempted to force their way into the building after being denied access due to COVID-19 restrictions. Oregon State Police declared the protest, organized by the right-wing group Patriot Prayer, an unlawful gathering



Hansell



Smith



Barreto

and arrested four protesters for trespassing and disorderly conduct.

Smith said there is “no place” for violence or destruction of public property, and he categorized the amount of taxpayer dollars used in the police response as “unfortunate.”

He also said he felt with the

LEGISLATIVE ACTIONS

- Lawmakers passed four bills during the Dec. 21 one-day special session:
- An eviction moratorium that includes \$200 million in relief for landlords and tenants.
 - A restaurant relief package that includes a provision legalizing cocktails to-go.
 - A bill that protects schools from some coronavirus-related lawsuits.
 - A measure that will transfer \$600 million in to the state’s emergency fund for COVID-19 and wildfire response and recovery.

technology and infrastructure available to the state there should be more public access to the legislature during sessions conducted during the pandemic.

“I’m of the opinion this whole process could have been

avoided,” he said.

The Capitol building is not the legislature, Smith said, and the legislature is not required to meet there. He said he would

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WEATHER

Full forecast on the back of B section

Tonight 21 LOW Thickening clouds

Friday 36/29 A p.m. flurry

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