

TODAY IN HISTORY

Today is Tuesday, Feb. 23, the 54th day of 2021. There are 311 days left in the year.

TODAY'S HIGHLIGHT IN HISTORY:

On Feb. 23, 1836, the siege of the Alamo began in San Antonio, Texas.

ON THIS DATE:

In 1861, President-elect Abraham Lincoln arrived secretly in Washington to take office, following word of a possible assassination plot in Baltimore.

In 1870, Mississippi was readmitted to the Union.

In 1903, President Theodore Roosevelt signed an agreement with Cuba to lease the area around Guantanamo Bay to the United States.

In 1942, the first shelling of the U.S. mainland during World War II occurred as a Japanese submarine fired on an oil refinery near Santa Barbara, California, causing little damage.

In 1945, during World War II, U.S. Marines on Iwo Jima captured Mount Suribachi, where they raised two American flags (the second flag-raising was captured in the iconic Associated Press photograph.)

In 1954, the first mass inoculation of schoolchildren against polio using the Salk vaccine began in Pittsburgh as some 5,000 students were vaccinated.

In 1965, film comedian Stan Laurel, 74, died in Santa Monica, California.

In 1981, an attempted coup began in Spain as 200 members of the Civil Guard invaded Parliament, taking lawmakers hostage. (However, the attempt collapsed 18 hours later.)

In 1995, the Dow Jones industrial average closed above the 4,000 mark for the first time, ending the day at 4,003.33.

In 1998, 42 people were killed, some 2,600 homes and businesses damaged or destroyed, by tornadoes in central Florida.

In 2007, a Mississippi grand jury refused to bring any new charges in the 1955 slaying of Emmett Till, the Black teenager who was beaten and shot after being accused of whistling at a white woman, declining to indict the woman, Carolyn Bryant Donham, for manslaughter.

Ten years ago: In a major policy reversal, the Obama administration said it would no longer defend the constitutionality of the Defense of Marriage Act, a federal law banning recognition of same-sex marriage.

Five years ago: Donald Trump won the Nevada Republican caucuses.

Book boxes a hit at Cook Memorial Library

By **DICK MASON**
The Observer

LA GRANDE — Cook Memorial Library in La Grande remains closed to the public due to the COVID-19 pandemic, but its staff continues opening new literary worlds for readers.

The library is getting materials to patrons with the help of creative new services, such as subscription book boxes.

The free program, which Cook Memorial started in December, proved popular, with openings filling up in little more time than it takes to read a page-turning Stephen King thriller.

Just ask Celine Vandervlugt, the teen services librarian at Cook Memorial. She said the response surprised her when library patrons had their first opportunity to register online in December.

"I could not believe how fast people signed up. All of our openings were filled within 24 hours," she said.

Vandervlugt is in charge of the teen portion of the subscription book box program. The teen and adult divisions each have room for 12 participants, just like the children's division, which is the program's newest offering.

Everyone registering



Alex Wittwer/The Observer

Celine Vandervlugt, teen services librarian at Cook Memorial Library, La Grande, stands Friday, Feb. 19, 2021, among dozens of paper bags containing craft supplies. The kits are a new service the library is working, alongside its popular subscription box program for adults, teens and children.

must first fill out a questionnaire that helps library staff members determine what books will be included. The questionnaire asks readers to choose the genres they like and to name at least three books and authors they enjoy reading, topics they want to read about and more.

The library staff provide adults and teens age 13-18 one or two books to read in two separate months. Readers in the children's

category will receive additional books because they take less time to read. All books must be returned within three weeks, just like any volume the library loans out, said Rose Peacock, who is the director of Cook Memorial's book box program for adults.

Staff place the volumes in boxes along with an assortment of items that include trinkets, tea, play dough and rubber stress balls.

"We call it swag,"

Vandervlugt said.

Readers get to keep the boxes and their swag, but they must return all of the books.

Vandervlugt said the subscription book box program is an extension of what the library's staff has been doing for years before COVID-19 pandemic closed the library to public entry.

"Finding books people enjoy is what we normally get to do in person," Vandervlugt said.

The written responses from participants in the program has been encouraging. Vandervlugt recalled one book box recipient who said the new book they were introduced to was now one of their "all time favorite books."

The next book box sign-up for teens and adults begins April 1. Everyone selected to receive a book box in April will be new, Vandervlugt said. The library will announce the next sign-up period for children later.

Carrie Bushman, children's services librarian, said the book box program also is a great way for the library's staff to keep its connections with loyal patrons.

"We don't want them to forget we are here," she said.

Bushman has been with the library for two decades and noted her position has allowed her to see children grow up in the community while coming regularly to the library.

Everyone must have a Cook Memorial Library card to be eligible for a book box.

Additional information on the program is available at www.cook-memoriallibrary.org/Pages/Index/182862/

EOU set to add two degrees

By **DICK MASON**
The Observer

LA GRANDE — Eastern Oregon University plans to offer degrees in agricultural entrepreneurship and in special education pending state approval.

The EOU Board of Trustees on Thursday, Feb. 18, approved the two new degree programs. Oregon's Higher Education Coordinating Commission and the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities must give their approvals before Eastern can add the degree offerings.

Tim Seydel, Eastern's vice president for University Advancement, said he believes there is an excellent chance both degree programs will be in place when fall term begins in late September 2021.

"We are excited," Seydel said.

Seydel said the agricultural entrepreneurship degree program would give students the in-depth understanding of business management, public policy, science

and technology and agriculture they need to work in the agriculture-related business and industry fields. He said companies such as Boise Cascade, Woodgrain and Lamb Weston are among the regional firms looking for students with skills the agricultural entrepreneurship program would develop.

Students would receive their degree from the Eastern's College of Business.

The special education degree would address a shortage of special education teachers in rural Oregon, Seydel said. The degree would allow students to earn in four years all the credits they need to become licensed special education teachers. Eastern students now need more than four years to become qualified to teach special education.

Seydel said both proposed degrees would fill important voids in Eastern Oregon and showcase how EOU is directly meeting the needs of the region.

Union County treasurer to retire

By **DICK MASON**
The Observer

LA GRANDE — The Union County Board of Commissioners is starting a search for a new treasurer.

The commissioners are seeking a successor for Donna Marshall, who has announced she will retire at the end of March. Marshall has served as treasurer since 2005, after first being elected in 2004.

Marshall was reelected to a fourth four-year term in 2020.

The county board is accepting applications for the post now. Whoever the board selects will serve until early January 2023 because the county plans to hold an election for the post in November 2022 for a full four-year term.

Marshall has worked for Union County since 1991 after joining its public works department. She became Union County's accounting manager in 1998.

Union County Commissioner

Donna Beverage spoke highly of Marshall's work.

"We think she did an awesome job and wish her well on her retirement," Beverage said.

Paul Anderes, chair of the Union County Board of Commissioners, echoed this sentiment. Anderes said he wanted to thank Marshall for "the incredible work she has done for so many years."

Marshall moved to La Grande in 1970, graduated from La Grande High School in 1971 and later attended Eastern Oregon University. Marshall worked at Grande Ronde Hospital, Union-Wallowa-Baker Federal Credit Union and Boise Cascade before beginning work with Union County's public works department.

People interested in the treasurer's position should submit a letter of interest and resume to the Union County Administrative Office, 1106 K Ave., La Grande 97850, or email it to sburgess@union-county.org by Friday, March 5.

Fundraiser brings in six figures for integrated care center

By **RONALD BOND**
Wallowa County Chieftain

ENTERPRISE — The Hearts for Health Integrated Care Center construction campaign recently picked up a huge financial boost.

A virtual live fundraiser for the care facility, which took place Feb. 6, raised more than \$221,000, the second-most raised in annual fundraising for the building — a partnership between the Wallowa Valley Center for Wellness and Winding Waters Clinic — which is under construction in Enterprise and set to be completed late this summer.

It was the fourth such

fundraiser — though the first virtual one — and was surpassed in giving only by the inaugural fundraising event, according to Tosca Rawls, Wallowa Valley Center for Wellness public relations and development director.

"The first year, we actually raised \$324,000, which was surprising," Rawls said. "It was the first year Center for Wellness had done any public fundraising."

The previous three years the event was at the Wallowa Lake Lodge, and last year only brought in about \$55,000. Rawls attributed two changes to the fund-

raising boost this year.

"Going virtual allowed us to reach more people during an event," she said. "When we were in the lodge in person ... we had 84 guests. This year we were not limited to the size of a location. Virtually, you could join from anywhere as long as you had internet. I believe that is one piece."

The second reason for the boost, Rawls said, was the community backing for the center, especially during the pandemic.

"They really believe in this project," she said. "They believe in the integrated care model that



Bill Bradshaw/Wallowa County Chieftain

Fundraising for the still-unfinished Hearts for Health Integrated Care Center, a partnership between the Wallowa Valley Center for Wellness and Winding Waters Clinic, brought in more than \$221,000 on Feb. 6, 2021. The center is scheduled to be finished this summer.

will take place in the new building. I believe that during the event we told

a compelling story. We were able to create a video for people to watch that

(showed) the integrated care model."

The 97-minute event included the story of Wallowa County resident Kimberly Botts, who shared her struggle with substance and alcohol abuse and triumphs gained through the integrated care model.

The integrated care center will offer a wide range of care options, including everything from behavioral and mental health and substance abuse services to dental, medical and nutritional care.

The construction costs of the center is expected to come in at about \$8 million.

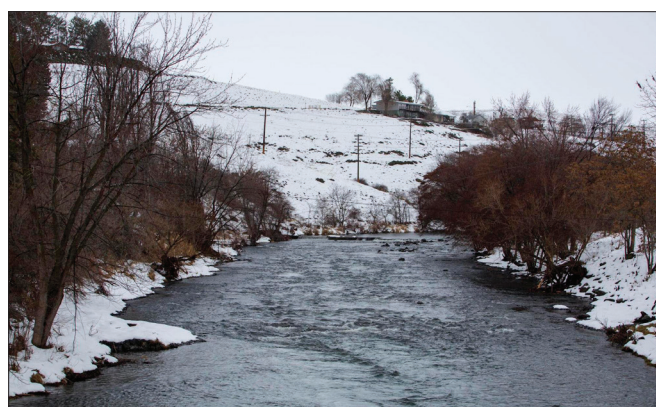
Floods called unlikely after snow blankets Blue Mountains

By **BRYCE DOLE**
East Oregonian

PENDLETON — After last week's winter storms covered Northeast Oregon in snow, followed by sunshine and warmer temperatures early in the week, many Umatilla County residents rightfully grew wary wondering if snowmelt could lead to floods.

"We'll see small rises in the rivers and the streams," said Marilyn Lohman, a hydrologist for the National Weather Service in Pendleton. "But they aren't expected to be anywhere near any flood stages at this time."

Snowpack levels in the Blue Mountains are nearing normal levels for this time



Ben Lonergan/East Oregonian

Snow blankets the banks of the Umatilla River in Pendleton on Friday, Feb. 19, 2021. The National Weather Service reports floods in Umatilla County are unlikely after recent heavy snow in the Blue Mountains.

of year after the hillsides were blasted with snow last week, according to Lohman. But the snow, for

the large part, was a dry snow due to the cold front, making conditions less conducive to flooding.

"The snow that fell was more powdery, which means it had a lower water content," Lohman said.

Short-term conditions over the next two weeks are also looking optimistic, Lohman said, with occasional weather systems forecast to bring light precipitation. Through March, the weather service is expecting cooler than normal temperatures and seasonal precipitation.

However, conditions can change daily, Lohman said. The weather service is continuing to monitor for signs of possible floods, and residents who may be at risk of flooding events should keep a watchful eye and consider preparing themselves

in case conditions suddenly shift.

"It's that time of year to keep abreast of the changes in the weather," Lohman said. "Maybe stay up-to-date on changing conditions and make sure that you are prepared. If something were to happen, what would you do? Maybe start thinking ahead."

Last week, Lohman and a group of officials from Umatilla and Walla Walla counties met to discuss the conditions and prepare for the possibility of future floods.

Among those attending were county and city officials as well as those from law enforcement, the National Weather Ser-

vice, the Bureau of Land Management, the Army Corps of Engineers, and the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation.

"I really sympathize with all these folks that have gone through last year's (flood) and are still dealing with it, and then we get 17 inches of snow, and they think — where in the world is that going to go?" said Umatilla County Commissioner Dan Dorran, who attended the meeting on behalf of the commissioners.

Officials plan to hold weekly briefings throughout the winter and early spring to be more proactive and plan for possible floods.