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Good day to our valued subscriber Lonnie Lester of La Grande

Union County risk falls to moderate

By ALEX WITWTER
The Observer

UNION COUNTY — Friday, Feb. 26, Union County restaurants can open their doors to dine-in service once again.

Following a correction to a faulty COVID-19 report that mistakenly placed three cases in Union County, the Oregon Health Authority decreased the county's risk level to "moderate."

Kody Guentert, owner and operator of Brother Bear Cafe in downtown La Grande, said he's jazzed for the drop.

"I'm excited," he said. "I've been waiting a long time for it to happen — all the businesses I've talked to have."

It is not only the financial stability that excites Guentert but the prospect of having customers and regulars return to the cafe for food, drinks and good times.

"There's always going to be the fear with rules and regulations

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Chief Joseph Days Rodeo saddles up for 2021

By ELLEN MORRIS BISHOP
For the Wallowa County Chieftain

JOSEPH — Save the dates! The 75th Chief Joseph Days rodeo is a sure thing for the last full week in July 2021.

At its Monday, Feb. 8 meeting, the Chief Joseph Days board of directors made a unanimous decision to hold the rodeo this summer Tuesday, July 27 through Sunday, Aug. 1. They are making

detailed plans for the event that include the bucking horse stampe on Tuesday, junior parade on Friday, and the grand parade on Saturday. The evening Thunder Room gathering will

go on. And, of course, all the bucking horses, bull riders, team ropers and other events that make rodeo an integral part of Western culture will happen in the Harley Tucker Memorial Rodeo Grounds.

"The board wanted to be sure there was no room for doubt," CJD Rodeo Board President Terry

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Jones



Alex Wittwer/The Observer

A contractor with Kirby Nagelhout Construction inspects a panel Tuesday, Feb. 23, 2021, in the McKenzie Theatre at Loso Hall. The building on the Eastern Oregon University campus is undergoing a \$5.5 million renovation.

New look for Loso Hall

Bonds paid for the \$5.5 million renovation that began in July 2020

By DICK MASON
The Observer

LA GRANDE — Eastern Oregon University's Loso Hall has been closed to the public since mid-March 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

When the university later reopens the 31-year-old building, community residents will find a renovated structure with technology adding a touch of theater magic — and a place where people with mobility issues will enjoy new freedom.

Both will show the evidence of \$5.5 million of renovation work to the performing arts building, which began in July 2020 and is nearing its final act.

"Most of the work will be completed by April," said Jon Fowler, project superintendent for Kirby Nagelhout Construction, the general contractor for the Loso Hall remodeling, which is funded by the sale of state bonds.

Many of the renovations focus on boosting accessibility to Loso Hall's two theaters —



Alex Wittwer/The Observer

Jon Fowler, project superintendent for the Loso Hall renovations, stands Tuesday, Feb. 23, 2021, in the catwalks above McKenzie Theatre. The Eastern Oregon University building is undergoing major renovations.

McKenzie and Schwarz.

McKenzie Theatre will have an elevator the physically challenged can take to the upper level of its first tier of seating. This will give people who normally only get to see performances at stage

level a chance to view productions from a higher perspective, Fowler said.

Those with mobility issues will be able to watch performances at one of six sites that accommodate wheelchairs and

their companions. Creating space for viewing sites within the theater's regular seating area was a heavyweight task.

"We had to remove 40,000 pounds of concrete," Fowler said.

Another McKenzie accessibility addition involved the installation of wide pathways leading to the stage at the two first-floor side entrances. The wider paths make it easier for people with mobility issues to get to the stage.

At Schwarz Theatre, accessibility also is getting a dramatic boost, where the stage now is level with the floor. Previously the seating area was sloped and above the stage.

Renovation work in Schwarz also includes the addition of a motorized turntable stage that can rotate to alter sets during performances.

"It will make it possible to change scenes quickly," said EOU theater professor Mike Heather.

The turntable can allow actors

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Patchwork of pandemic rules creates ethical issues

By GARY A. WARNER
Oregon Capital Bureau

SALEM — Oregon vaccinates teachers before seniors.

California punishes hospitals for vaccinating teachers.

Washington vaccinates all seniors — and warns older Oregonians against trying to sneak north for an early shot.

Governors around the country have issued edicts during the COVID-19 crisis that often conflict with neighboring states, creating a national patchwork of does and don'ts.

"States are all over the place," said Dr. Arthur Caplan, director of New York University Langone's Division of Medical Ethics. "It's rarely clear why restrictions are expanded or removed. Criteria are modified without explanation."

The COVID-19 pandemic is the greatest public health crisis

in a century, made all the more difficult by strict adherence to a geographical fiction: The United States is 50 distinct states.

Hawaii is an island in the middle of the Pacific. All other states are connected by land mass, with demarcations of boundaries sometimes a river or mountain range, but often just a 19th-century surveyor's line. The problem is the virus doesn't factor in whether the human it is infecting lives on the Idaho or Oregon side of the Snake River.

The result has been 50 states fighting COVID-19 in 50 different ways. Masks or no masks. Open for business or shut for safety. Lockdown or liberty.

The states' fragmented war on COVID-19 has resulted in a resounding defeat. No corner of the planet has been ravaged like the United States. The nation makes up 4% of the world popu-

lation, but has accounted for 20% of the nearly 2.5 million killed in the pandemic, according to the Johns Hopkins Coronavirus Resource Center and the U.S. Census Bureau.

The political equivalent of herding cats has continued with the arrival of two vaccines that could snuff out the virus. The Pfizer and Moderna vaccines require two shots, given about a month apart.

States have been allocated a portion of the available vaccine equal to their percentage of the national population.

For Oregon, that comes out to about 1.3%.

With the initial shipments, state health agencies were sent a long list of recommendations on how to parcel out the shots. But in the end, the final priority list for the scarce vaccine was up to each of the 50 governors.

Ethicists call these "lifeboat" decisions — who, when and why someone could be chosen to live or die. An inoculation against a potentially deadly virus fits the bill.

Gov. Kate Brown promised Oregon would distribute the shots with equity.

The decisions are necessary, but the fragmentation of evaluating a comparative value of human lives through 50 different prisms, was going to be problematic from the start.

Governors and health officials are human beings who bring their own beliefs to decisions. Any choice will attach a social value to people or groups.

The start was the easiest part from an ethical standpoint.

The first shots were sent to protect doctors, nurses, and other

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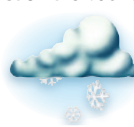
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WEATHER Full forecast on the back of B section



Tonight
32 Low
Snow, 1-2"



Friday
35/27
Windy

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