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TUESDAY • March 9, 2021 • \$1.50 Good day to our valued subscriber Daniel Fine of La Grande

## Apartments may have a Head Start classroom

By DICK MASON  
The Observer

LA GRANDE — The Eastern Oregon University Head Start program is getting the opportunity to expand its La Grande presence.

The Portland firm Community Development Partners is heading up the work to develop Timber Ridge Apartments, a lower-income housing project, on 4.79 acres on East Q Avenue between 26th and 27th streets. Community Development Partners has offered EOU Head Start a classroom in its community center at no cost.

Robert Kleng, director of EOU Head Start, said he would not dream of passing on the offer.

“It blew my socks off,” Kleng said.

He said an Early Head Start program will be operated at Timber Ridge Apartments, if operational funding is obtained, when the housing project is completed in about two years. Kleng said there is an excellent chance EOU Head Start will receive the state or federal grants it needs because a structure will be in place for the program. Kleng

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## Union County Fair looks to return

By DICK MASON  
The Observer

LA GRANDE — The Union County Fair may ride again this summer.

The Union County Fair Board has voted to bring back the fair, which was canceled in the summer of 2020 because of COVID-19. Union County Fair Manager Suz Brazeau Red Hawk said the fair means so much to the youth of this community, many of whom show animals via FFA and 4-H, that the fair board decided to restore the event.

Brazeau Red Hawk said it also is important to go on with the fair because it has an integral place in the community.

“It is a tradition,” she said. “It has been around almost 150 years.”

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Alex Wittwer/The Observer

Snow devours a cabin in Tollgate on Monday, March 8, 2021. Snow levels in the Blue Mountains, and other sites around Eastern Oregon increased to above-average levels in February.

# Growing snowpack

## Storms push NE Oregon snowpack to well above average

By JAYSON JACOBY  
Baker City Herald

BAKER CITY — February pulled off a feat in its 28 days that most months can't manage in 30 or 31.

A barrage of blizzards during the shortest month boosted the snowpack in the mountains of Northeast Oregon from below average to well above. At a few measuring sites the snowpack doubled, or nearly so, during February.

“Yes, those storms we saw from mid to late February really boosted the snowpack,” said Marilyn Lohmann with the National Weather Service in Pendleton.

The Upper Grande Ronde Basin is at 140% of normal with the Lower Grande Ronde near 120% of normal, and the Wallowas stand at 124% of normal, she reported. This is significantly higher than at the start of February when the basin snowpack was 91% of normal. February precipitation was 216% of average. Precipitation since the beginning of the water year (October 1 to March 1) has been 111% of average.

“In looking back over February, most sites saw snow depth increases anywhere from 15 to 40 inches with some locations seeing near 50 inches of snow,” Lohmann said.

Snow was 39 inches deep as of Monday, March 8, at the Bowman Springs snotel — snow telemetry — site in the Blue Moun-



Jayson Jacoby/Baker City Herald

Snow-draped ponderosa pine trees near Sumpter on Feb. 27, 2021, show the evidence of February's snowfall. A recent survey just east of Anthony Lake measure 89 inches of snow — almost twice the depth from January.

tains between La Grande and Pilot Rock, according to data from the Nature Resource Conservation Service. Moss Springs northeast of Union had 83 inches of snow

Monday, and Mount Howard south of Enterprise had 39 inches.

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# Brown orders teachers to return to classrooms

## Most Union County schools providing in-person teaching, La Grande seeks clarity on the order

By GILLIAN FLACCUS  
Associated Press

PORTLAND — Oregon Gov. Kate Brown said Friday, March 5, she will issue an executive order mandating that all K-12 public schools provide universal access to in-person learning by the month's end for students up to fifth grade and by mid-April for older students.

The state's coronavirus case numbers have fallen sharply in recent weeks. Oregon put teachers ahead of older residents in the line for the

COVID-19 vaccine — a decision that angered many people 65 and older. As teachers get vaccinated, Brown has been under tremendous pressure from parents and local elected officials in many counties to reopen schools.

All public schools in Union County now are providing in-person instruction with the exception of Elgin High School.

The Elgin School district closed the high school March 4 because of COVID-19 cases.

The school now is offering only distance education to its junior and senior high school students. The district plans on keeping the school closed to in-person instruction until March 29, according to Elgin School District Superintendent Dianne Greif.

La Grande School District Superintendent George Mendoza on Friday reported the district is “seeking clarity as to whether the executive action allows our grades in hybrid learning (grades 6-12) to return all students to daily in-person instruction, eliminating our current A/B schedule.”

Existing rules — including

allowing one person per 35 square feet, class cohort sizes and maintaining social distance — prohibit the district from returning completely to the in-person model in grades 6-12, according to Mendoza, and the rules may change in the coming weeks. He told parents and community members the district would provide more information as it learns more.

Many teachers' unions nationally have balked at a return to in-person learning, putting them at odds with Democratic governors like Brown in some states.

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Tonight 23 Low Cold  
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### CONTACT US

541-963-3161  
Issue 29  
2 sections, 12 pages  
La Grande, Oregon  
Email story ideas to news@lagrandeobserver.com. More contact info on Page 4A.

