

TODAY IN HISTORY

Today is Tuesday, March 16, the 75th day of 2021. There are 290 days left in the year.

TODAY'S HIGHLIGHTS IN HISTORY:

On March 16, 1945, during World War II, American forces declared they had secured Iwo Jima, although pockets of Japanese resistance remained.

ON THIS DATE:

In 1802, President Thomas Jefferson signed a measure authorizing the establishment of the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, New York.

In 1926, rocket science pioneer Robert H. Goddard successfully tested the first liquid-fueled rocket at his Aunt Effie's farm in Auburn, Massachusetts.

In 1935, Adolf Hitler decided to break the military terms set by the Treaty of Versailles by ordering the rearming of Germany.

In 1968, the My Lai massacre took place during the Vietnam War as U.S. Army soldiers hunting for Viet Cong fighters and sympathizers killed unarmed villagers in two hamlets of Son My village; estimates of the death toll vary from 347 to 504. Sen. Robert F. Kennedy of New York announced his candidacy for the Democratic presidential nomination.

In 1972, in a nationally broadcast address, President Richard Nixon called for a moratorium on court-ordered school busing to achieve racial desegregation.

In 1984, William Buckley, the CIA station chief in Beirut, was kidnapped by Hezbollah militants (he was tortured by his captors and killed in 1985).

In 1987, Massachusetts Gov. Michael Dukakis announced his candidacy for the Democratic presidential nomination.

In 1991, a plane carrying seven members of country singer Reba McEntire's band and her tour manager crashed into Otay Mountain in southern California, killing all on board. U.S. skaters Kristi Yamaguchi, Tonya Harding and Nancy Kerrigan swept the World Figure Skating Championships in Munich, Germany.

In 1994, figure skater Tonya Harding pleaded guilty in Portland, Oregon, to conspiracy to hinder prosecution for covering up an attack on rival Nancy Kerrigan, avoiding jail but drawing a \$100,000 fine.

In 2003, American activist Rachel Corrie, 23, was crushed to death by an Israeli military bulldozer while trying to block demolition of a Palestinian home in the Gaza Strip.

In 2004, China declared victory in its fight against bird flu, saying it had "stamped out" all its known cases.

In 2006, Iraq's new parliament met briefly for the first time; lawmakers took the oath but did no business and adjourned after just 40 minutes, unable to agree on a speaker, let alone a prime minister.

Ten years ago: Pakistan abruptly freed CIA contractor Raymond Allen Davis, who had shot and killed two men in a gunfight in Lahore, after a deal was reached to pay \$2.34 million to the men's families.

Five years ago: President Barack Obama nominated Merrick Garland to take the seat of Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia, who had died the previous month; Republicans pledged to leave the seat empty until after the presidential election and said they wouldn't even hold confirmation hearings. Frank Sinatra Jr., 72, who carried on his famous father's legacy with his own music career, died while on tour in Daytona Beach, Florida.

LG School District renovating modulars

By **DICK MASON**
The Observer

LA GRANDE — The La Grande School District's three modular buildings at K Avenue and Sunset Drive, structures dormant for the past four years, are about to be revitalized.

The modular units served as classrooms for Central Elementary School for many years before the district tore down the aging building at 402 K Ave. and replaced it in 2017 with one at 701 H Ave. Now the district is remodeling the modulars.

Renovation work is underway that will restore the south modular for use as a classroom, convert the center one into an office building and the north unit into a storage space. The district expects the work to wrap up by September.

The district later will lease the structure for the classroom building to



Alex Wittwer/The Observer

La Grande School District maintenance manager Brad Sunderman walks through the three-piece modular buildings near La Grande High School on Monday, March 15, 2021. The district is remodeling the modular buildings to accommodate an expansion of Eastern Oregon University's Head Start program as well as district offices.

Eastern Oregon University Head Start, which will use it to expand its preschool program. The center modular will provide office space for La Grande School District specialists serving students

with mental health and behavior issues, said Joseph Waite, the district's facilities and bond manager.

Robert Kleng, director of EOU Head Start, said the availability of the class-

room modular will give his program a major boost by expanding the number of students EOU Head Start can serve by at least 20. He noted the school district will charge EOU Head Start nothing for the renovation work and reasonable rent.

"The school district is so supportive of preschool education," Kleng said.

The preschool students to attend classes at the site will be 3-5 years old. Head Start instruction is free for students if their families meet income standards. For example, a family with two parents and two children that has an annual income of \$52,000 could send its children there for no charge.

EOU Head Start hopes to begin offering classes at the new site in the fall, after it obtains grant funding from the state or federal government for the operation of a new site. Kleng is optimistic this funding

will come through in part because Gov. Kate Brown's proposed budget for the 2021-23 biennium includes a large amount of money for the expansion of Head Start programs in Oregon.

The new classroom building at K Avenue and Sunset Drive will complement centers EOU Head Start has in southeast La Grande, Elgin, Union and Baker City.

The modular to serve as a classroom building and the one that will become office space are connected but do not have an interior entry allowing people to walk to and from the buildings without going outside. The renovation work will change this, adding an door between the two buildings, Waite said.

The La Grande School District High Cost Capital Project fund and its Student Success Act fund will pay for the modular renovation.

Long-distance vaccine helper

By **LISA BRITTON**
For the Baker City Herald

BAKER CITY — Nick Cripe found himself with some extra time between jobs as a firefighter and paramedic.

"I was back in Baker, just killing time," said Cripe, 28.

He grew up in Baker City, and graduated from Baker High School in 2011.

He asked at nearby hospitals if he could apply for short-term work, but the paperwork proved to be an obstacle.

To fill his time, Cripe went to work for Appliances & More in Baker City.

"I'd like to do something medical, but it might be nice to take a month off," he remembers thinking.

That job lasted one day. When the owner, Jay Wilson, learned about Cripe's medical background, he suggested Cripe call Chris Arvidson of North Powder.

Arvidson runs Med Transport Inc. and has contracts with the Federal Emergency Management Agency and other disaster relief agencies. Right now, those contracts need medical professionals to help at vaccination clinics and "step down" services at hospitals across the country.

Cripe called Arvidson, and the next day Cripe was on an airplane bound for New Jersey.

"It was very random," Cripe said of how this opportunity came about. "Everything just aligned."

He left Baker City on Feb. 3, and returned March 6.

Cripe was assigned to a vaccination clinic set up in an Atlantic City convention center — one of several "mega sites" established to administer COVID-19 vaccines.

By **DICK MASON**

The Observer

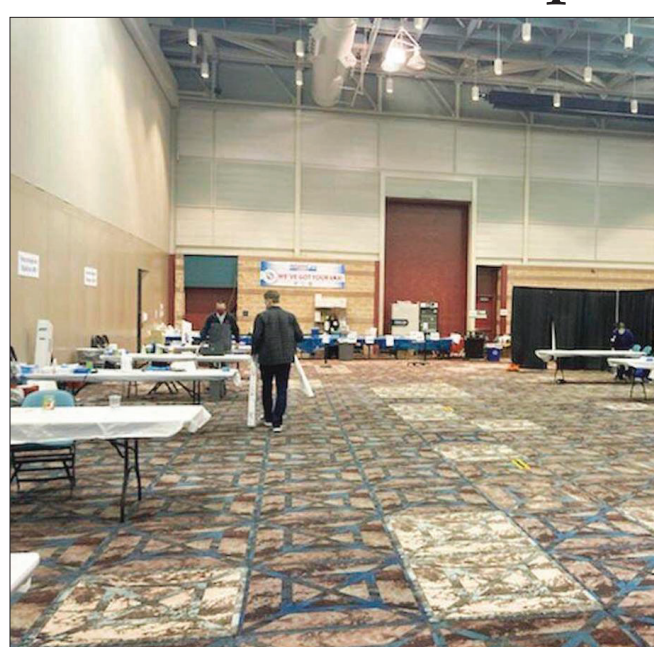
SUMMERVILLE — Kathy Oliver does not know what the future holds but she does know this, her 15th year as a member of the Elgin Lions Club promises to be one of her most memorable — and busiest.



Oliver

The International Association of Lions Clubs named Oliver the next governor for District 36G, which encompasses much of the portion of Oregon east of the Cascades and has about 20 clubs. Oliver said she is honored and moved by the confidence the Lions organization has shown in her.

"People have been so supportive," Oliver said. The Summerville resident will take the reins



Nick Cripe/Contributed Photo

Nick Cripe of Baker City worked for a month at a "mega site" COVID-19 vaccination clinic in New Jersey during most of February 2021.

"The convention center is huge. We used maybe a tenth of it," he said.

When he arrived, a shift of 10 nurses were giving 400 to 600 shots a day.

Cripe's unit of 10 paramedics began working 12-hour shifts, seven days a week.

"By the time we left, we were doing 3,600 shots a day," he said. "Their goal was to get to 4,000 a day."

Except for about 80 doses, he said they were giving the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine. A full pharmacy on site stored the vaccine until needed.

The experience, he said, differed greatly from his career as a firefighter/paramedic where he never knew what daily challenges he would encounter.

At the vaccination clinic, he had the same routine every day: he got up at 5:30 a.m., had breakfast at 6:30 a.m., arrived at the convention center at 7 a.m., and then gave shots from 8 a.m. to 7 p.m.

"It almost seemed like Groundhog Day," he said, referring to the 1993 Bill Murray film.

It did, however, give him the chance to meet new people.

"I had a lot of good conversations," he said. "So many people were so thankful for me being there."

Having a vaccine available, he said, seemed to give people new hope.

"A bunch of people cried — the thought of the world going back to a sense of normalcy," he said.

And he's glad he had the chance to help.

"I was honored to do it. It was a great experience," he said. "There are so many good people in the world. I made some lifelong friends."

He's planning to stick around Eastern Oregon and hopes to take more deployments such as this one.

"I think there will be endless opportunities," Cripe said.

Former prison guard gets 15-year prison term for child pornography

By **CHRIS COLLINS**
Baker City Herald

BAKER CITY — A former correctional officer at the Powder River Correctional Facility, Baker City, who has spent nearly a year behind bars at the Baker County Jail, will spend the next 15 years in prison after pleading guilty to child pornography charges Tuesday, March 9, in Baker County Circuit Court.

Judge Matt Shirliff sided with District Attorney Greg Baxter in taking the harsher end of a plea agreement that ranged from five years to 15 years in prison in sentencing David Leon Cernazanu.

As part of the agreement, Cernazanu, 49, pleaded guilty to three counts of second-degree encouraging child sexual abuse, a Class C felony.

Cernazanu will receive credit for the time he served in jail and the ability to earn good time toward earlier release while in prison.

The state dismissed 62 other counts against Cernazanu, including charges of first-degree encouraging child sexual abuse, first-degree invasion of personal privacy and using a child in sexually explicit conduct.

Shirliff also ordered Cernazanu to complete three years of post-prison supervision upon release, including sex offender treatment. He also must register as a sex offender.

Baxter and Robert Moon, a Baker City attorney the court appointed to represent Cernazanu, each called witnesses to bolster their

case. Baxter argued for the 15-year sentence, and Moon called for a shorter prison term.

An audience of about 30 people, including law enforcement and mental health professionals and victims and their family members, were in the courtroom during the two-hour hearing.

Cernazanu was arrested April 24, 2020, at his Baker City home after an investigation by the state Department of Justice and the Oregon State Police. OSP executed a search of Cernazanu's home on Feb. 19, 2020, and seized evidence, including computers and phones, which the Oregon Department of Justice analyzed. What they found was "an astronomical amount of child pornography," Baxter said during Tuesday's proceedings.

Baxter asked the judge to take into consideration that among the victims were eight local children, four of whom were in the courtroom. Baxter said parents had trusted Cernazanu, who had worked in a position of authority as a correctional officer at Powder River since 2017 and had served as a reserve officer for the Baker City Police Department for a short time. The girls came to his home as friends of his daughter, who also was victimized, the district attorney said.

The victims have suffered depression, suicidal thoughts, anorexia and negative feelings of self-worth as a result of Cernazanu's crimes, Baxter said.

Kathy Oliver to lead Lions' Eastern Oregon region

By **DICK MASON**

The Observer

Kathy Oliver does not know what the future holds but she does know this, her 15th year as a member of the Elgin Lions Club promises to be one of her most memorable — and busiest.

The International Association of Lions Clubs named Oliver the next governor for District 36G, which encompasses much of the portion of Oregon east of the Cascades and has about 20 clubs. Oliver said she is honored and moved by the confidence the Lions organization has shown in her.

"People have been so supportive," Oliver said. The Summerville resident will take the reins

of District 36G in June and serve one year. She will succeed John Taylor of Pendleton who is completing his one-year term as governor.

Oliver has an upbeat vision for a district that is part of an organization renowned for saving sight.

She said she wants to help her district rebound after being rattled by the COVID-19 pandemic. Oliver noted clubs across the district are facing declining membership due to COVID-19 concerns. The Elgin Lions Club, which Oliver is president of, for example, has declined nearly 10% over the past year.

Oliver will travel throughout Eastern Oregon to visit chapters to encourage them to take steps to boost membership to pre-pandemic levels, such as inviting

former members back and to arrange for them to take part in club projects.

"The key is getting people involved," said Oliver, who was named first vice president of District 36G in November 2020.

She said heightening the visibility of Lions clubs also will boost membership. Oliver noted that when people see others in the community volunteering, they will be more likely to want to join.

Oliver also will be talking with clubs about her hopes of getting chapters to continue raising money to help those in Western Oregon who still are suffering from the devastating wildfires that hit in late summer of 2020.

The future governor also will be working to keep programs such as the Lions' long-running vision

screening program strong.

The Lions of District 36G, like those in states throughout the country, annually screen students for vision problems. This is now done with an electronic screener that quickly can detect conditions including blurred vision, nearsightedness, farsightedness and eye misalignment. Each individual screening takes just a few seconds and is performed from a distance of about 3 feet.

Students found to have vision issues are referred to optometrists and ophthalmologists.

Oliver is amazed at how quickly screenings can now occur. She said in small schools districts, including Elgin and Imbler, club volunteers complete the screenings for all students in less than an hour.

Oliver is following the

lead of her husband of 35 years, Steve Oliver, who served as District 36G governor four years ago. Kathy Oliver said her husband, who is a retired Union County sheriff, will be accompanying her on many of her trips throughout the district. She anticipates they will be on the road a lot, noting her husband, who is still a Lion, drove about 20,000 miles making District 36G business trips during his year as governor.

Oliver said her husband will provide valuable support during her one-year term.

"He has helped a lot already," she said.

Oliver noted that he has a wellspring of leadership ability she wants to draw upon.

"I hope that just a little bit of his talent will rub off on me," she said.