

TODAY IN HISTORY

Today is Saturday, March 20, the 79th day of 2021. There are 286 days left in the year. Spring arrives at 5:37 a.m. Eastern Daylight Time.

TODAY'S HIGHLIGHT IN HISTORY:

On March 20, 1995, in Tokyo, 12 people were killed, more than 5,500 others sickened when packages containing the deadly chemical sarin were leaked on five separate subway trains by Aum Shinrikyo cult members.

ON THIS DATE:

In 1413, England's King Henry IV died; he was succeeded by Henry V.

In 1727, physicist, mathematician and astronomer Sir Isaac Newton died in London.

In 1815, Napoleon Bonaparte returned to Paris after escaping his exile on Elba, beginning his "Hundred Days" rule.

In 1854, the Republican Party of the United States was founded by slavery opponents at a schoolhouse in Ripon, Wisconsin.

In 1922, the decommissioned USS Jupiter, converted into the first U.S. Navy aircraft carrier, was re-commissioned as the USS Langley.

In 1933, the state of Florida electrocuted Giuseppe Zangara for shooting to death Chicago Mayor Anton J. Cermak at a Miami event attended by President-elect Franklin D. Roosevelt, the presumed target, the previous February.

In 1952, the U.S. Senate ratified, 66-10, a Security Treaty with Japan.

In 1976, kidnapped newspaper heiress Patricia Hearst was convicted of armed robbery for her part in a San Francisco bank holdup carried out by the Symbionese Liberation Army. (Hearst was sentenced to seven years in prison; she was released after serving 22 months, and was pardoned in 2001 by President Bill Clinton.)

In 1977, voters in Paris chose former French Prime Minister Jacques Chirac to be the French capital's first mayor in more than a century.

In 1985, Libby Riddles of Teller, Alaska, became the first woman to win the Iditarod Trail Dog Sled Race.

La Grande Farmers Market bouncing back

Certain events to return in 2021, board considers going nonprofit

By PHIL WRIGHT
The Observer

LA GRANDE — The La Grande Farmers Market is readying for its 41st season.

Market manager Shaletta Baldwin said the market opens Saturday, May 15. She also said the market will continue to operate with COVID-19 restrictions in place, but some events the market had to drop for the pandemic in 2020 will be making a return, including Kids Day.

The market operates May through October on Saturdays from 9 a.m. to noon and Tuesdays 3-6 p.m. in downtown La Grande at Max Square on the corner of Fourth Street and Adams Avenue. Baldwin said the market in the past has carved out some space for youths to set up booths on a Saturday to sell their own goods, plus there are activities for children, such as arts and crafts.

"We usually get a really good sponsor for this," she said. "Valley Insurance already signed on."

This year's market also is allowing the return of artists and craftspeople to sell their goods and will provide space for a community booth. Baldwin explained that space is



The Observer, File

Sarah Fischer of Evergreen Farm, La Grande, sells her produce Saturday, Oct. 10, 2020, at the La Grande Farmers Market. The local market opens its 2021 season on May 15. While COVID-19 restrictions remain, the market is bringing back some events, including Kids Day.

valuable for community organizations and nonprofits because it allows them to get in front of the audience they appeal to.

Those were missing from the 2020 season because booths had to set up 6-10 feet apart to meet coronavirus requirements for social distancing, she said, so the market allowed the sale of consumables only. Hot food service was not allowed last year and remains off the menu for the upcoming season.

"We have not gotten cleared to do that yet," she said.

But the market does anticipate providing live music again, probably about halfway through the

season. Baldwin said, by then, enough people should have received COVID-19 vaccinations to allow more events to return.

"That is something we are really looking forward to," she said.

The restrictions to curb the spread of the virus last year meant the market had to curtail much of what it usually offered.

"We definitely were impacted because in years past we could have 40-some vendors on a normal schedule," Baldwin said, "but last year we topped out at 25."

Yet, the vendors who participated in the market tended to do at least as well as in previous years.

Baldwin said the market conducted a postseason survey and found most vendors matched their sales or did better than they had in 2019. And while the market started slow, it didn't end that way.

"As soon as the season was up and running, everything was pretty much back to normal as far as transactions go," she said.

Still, fewer vendors meant the La Grande Farmers Market as a business struggled.

The market operates on a budget of about \$20,000 a year, Baldwin said, and much of that money goes to paying the market manager and a promotions manager. Without the usual number

of vendors, she said, the market has sought sponsors and partnerships to help cover financial gaps.

"Whatever it takes to get the show to go on, we're doing it," Baldwin said.

That includes exploring the possibility of a 501c3 charitable nonprofit.

"We are considering it," she said.

Baldwin said the board has talked about becoming a nonprofit because it opens up the market to some revenue streams, primarily grants, that it doesn't qualify for now. It also would mean people who donate to the market could claim that charitable donation on their taxes.

Becoming a 501c3 is a lengthy process, she said, and would take some time.

Baldwin also encouraged current and prospective vendors to attend the market's annual vendor meeting, this year on April 9 via the streaming meeting platform Zoom.

The meeting provides information to new vendors and allows veteran vendors to firm up their commitments. This year, the board also is looking to fill a vacancy.

The 10-member board is one shy, Baldwin said, and seeking someone who is community-minded and has an interest in local food systems.

For more information about the market, including the annual meeting, visit www.lagrandefarmers-market.org.

Bridge repair work starts soon near Elgin

The Observer

ELGIN — The Oregon Department of Transportation announced it will be repairing the Grande Ronde River (South Elgin) Bridge along Highway 82 starting March 29.

The structure stands at mile point 19.2, less than a mile southwest of Elgin. According to the press release from ODOT, drivers can expect delays up to 20 minutes for a day or two beginning April 1, as the work reduces travel to one lane and flaggers control traffic while crews install temporary barriers down the middle of the bridge and temporary traffic signals at both ends of the bridge.

Once the traffic signals are operational, wait times will be shorter, depending on traffic volumes, according to ODOT. The temporary signals, lane closures and construction delays will continue 24/7 through the summer months.

"Please be patient and plan extra travel time along this route," the state transportation department urged in the press release. "Obey



Alex Wittwer/The Observer

Above, the view Thursday afternoon, March 18, 2021, from under the Grande Ronde River (South Elgin) Bridge along Highway 82 near Elgin. The Oregon Department of Transportation plans on repairing the deteriorating bridge starting March 29. Below, a map from Google Earth shows the scope of the project.



flaggers and traffic signals at all times to keep everyone safe."

ODOT also advised drivers to remember that traffic fines double in work zones.

The bridge was built in 1966, according to ODOT, and needs repairs to extend its life. The existing concrete overlay is deteriorating, cracking and delaminating, ODOT stated, and the bridge joints are cracking. The railing does not meet safety standards, and the bridge also is narrow, making travel unsafe for pedestrians and bicyclists.

The \$1.3 million project includes removing and replacing the concrete overlay and bridge rail and replacing the deck joints to repair deteriorating bridge conditions and improve safety for motorists, bicyclists and pedestrians. ODOT plans to complete the project and lift lane restrictions by July 15.

For more information on this and other state road projects in Eastern Oregon, visit www.tinyurl.com/odot5.

21 meet filing deadline for school board elections

Four races are contested: 1 in Cove, 2 in Imbler, 1 in La Grande

By DICK MASON
The Observer

UNION COUNTY — The Union County school board election roster now is set.

A total of 21 candidates met the filing deadline Thursday, March 15, for the May 18 election. The candidates will be running for 17 open positions, including four that are to be contested. The Imbler School Board has two contested races and the La Grande and Cove boards each have one. The following is a breakdown of the positions up for election and candidates who have filed based in the information the candidates provided to the office of the Union County clerk.

Cove School Board

One of the board's three seats up for election will be contested.

Chris Thew, an athletic trainer, will challenge incumbent Andy Lindsey, a civil engineer, for Position 1.

Positions 3 and 4 also are up for election and incumbents filed for both. John Frisch, who works in the agriculture production field, will run for reelection to Position 3, and Jamie Dickenson, a clinic manager, is running for reelection to Position 4.

Elgin School Board

Incumbents filed for both its open positions.

Chuck Anderson, a general contractor, is set to run for Position 3, and Lara Moore, vice president for finance and administration at Eastern Oregon University, will run for Position 5.

Imbler School Board

Two of the school board's three open positions will have contested races.

Three candidates filed for Position 3: Bud Whit-

comb, the owner and operator of a custom body and paint shop; Tim Phelps, a sales and marketing director; and Joseph "Joe" Fisher Jr., a building official.

Dan McDonald, the incumbent, did not file for reelection.

Two candidates filed for Position 5: Lavar Bowles, who works in the construction management field, and Jason Beck, a rancher. Wade Bingaman, the incumbent, did not file.

Position 4 also is up for election and one candidate filed, incumbent Pam Glenn.

La Grande School Board

One of the school board's four positions up for election will be contested.

That race will involve Position 4 where cyclist Elijah Romer is challenging incumbent Randy Shaw, an auto body technician.

Incumbent Danelle Lindsey-Wilson, the owner of a hair salon, is running for reelection to Position 1; incumbent Bruce Kevan, a retired educator, filed for Position 5; and Jake Hanson, the owner and operator of an auto salvage company, filed for Position 2.

Michelle Perry, the Position 2 incumbent, did not file for reelection.

North Powder School Board

Positions 1 and 2 are up for election and the incumbent for each filed for reelection.

Drew Martin filed to run for Position 1 and Danyell Nesser, a receptionist, filed for Position 2.

Union School Board

Positions 1, 2 and 3 are open, and incumbents were the lone candidates to file.

Mark Wing, who is retired, is running for Position 1; Jocelyn Jones, a retired educator, filed for Position 2; and Deb Baker filed for Position 3.

Wallowa Public Library offers spring break adventures

By ELLEN MORRIS BISHOP
Wallowa County Chieftain

WALLOWA — Spring break is coming.

That means that restless, cabin-fevered feet will want to go exploring. But with COVID-19 still lurking in Wallowa County communities and elsewhere, exploring is not so simple.

The Wallowa Public Library is coming to the rescue. Its "Book an Adventure" program will get you traveling on the magic carpet of books.

"Book an Adventure is a program for all ages to encourage continued reading and literacy development as the days get warmer and through the spring break holiday from school," Wallowa Public Library Director Holly Goebel said. "We want people to be able to travel safely, and books and your imagination are great ways to do that."

Patrons of all ages can stop by the library to check out a book and pick up "An Adventure Itinerary" to take home and read. They



Ellen Morris Bishop/For the Wallowa County Chieftain

Wallowa Public Library Director Holly Goebel's "Book an Adventure" program encourages people to travel safely with books over spring break.

can then return the completed itinerary for a prize. There's no limit on the number of "trips" to take to encourage folks to read the rest of March.

The itinerary card asks you to list the book title, the reader's favorite part, and "Where I went." That could be anywhere the book takes you, Goebel said. It could be a science-fiction book that takes you to Mars, or

to the future. It could be a book that's helping you plan summer backpacking trips in the Wallowas or a trip into your backyard to look at bugs. Especially for children, it could be a book that takes them to fairy-tale places or for a ride on a fire truck.

"Itineraries will be accepted for prizes through the month of April because we all know everyone reads

at different rates, and with a pandemic continuing to make leaving home challenging, we want to be as flexible as possible," Goebel said.

The prizes include jump ropes, Legos, nerf rocket shooters, chalk, books or an entry into a raffle for gift card for children. Adult prizes include a Bookloft gift card and a Blue Banana gift card.

The project is funded by the Friends of the Wallowa Public Library.

Wallowa Public Library is open 9 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Wednesday, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Thursday, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Friday and 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. on the first and third Saturdays of each month.

"The library is open for in-person browsing by appointment, keeping groups to one cohort/family at a time, and masks are required for anyone 5 years and older," Goebel said. "We also offer at-the-door pick-up for patrons not ready to browse in person, or who just want to grab their items and go."