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SERVING UNION AND WALLOWA COUNTIES SINCE 1896

# THE OBSERVER

**Weekend Edition**

SATURDAY - MONDAY • April 10, 2021 • \$1.50

Good day to our valued subscriber Karen Mudd of Union

## Search to continue for missing woman

Deb Hendrichs of Idaho was last seen Jan. 11 near Meacham

By **DICK MASON**  
The Observer

MEACHAM — Cindy Taylor is not losing count of the days her sister has been missing. She also is not losing hope.

Taylor's sister, Deborah "Deb" Hendrichs, 56, of Star, Idaho, went missing Jan. 11 at about 5 p.m. just outside Meacham, where her car, a black Toyota RAV4, ran out of gas at a bridge entrance.

"This is day 87. I do not want this to become a cold case," Taylor said Thursday, April 8.

Taylor has been working feverishly since Jan. 11 to find her sister. Taylor was in Northeast Oregon Monday and Tuesday, April 5-6, scouring the Meacham area with her husband and two metal detector operators. The search, as previous ones, proved fruitless.

"We found nothing. We were hoping to find personal effects there," said Taylor, who lives in Merrill near Klamath Falls.

Oregon State Police Lt. Daniel Conner of Union County shares Taylor's frustration, explaining no new leads have surfaced.

"The case has gone absolutely dark," Conner said.

To get the investigation to move forward, OSP again is encouraging people to report any information they have. State police is particularly eager to talk with anyone who may have seen suspicious people late in the afternoon of Jan. 11 near where Hendrichs' compact SUV stalled, Conner said.

An Oregon Department of Transportation worker is the last person who reported seeing Hendrichs after her vehicle ran out of gas. Conner said the ODOT employee asked Hendrichs if she needed help and she said her cellphone was not working in the area but someone was coming to help. The ODOT employee then put out safety flares to protect Hendrichs and called OSP, which sent a trooper to assist.

The trooper arrived 20 minutes later to find an empty

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Alex Wittwer/The Observer

Rozzanne Moldovan, a crisis response advocate with Shelter From the Storm, Island City, carries bags of donated food from the main lobby of the shelter to the pantry in the back room on Thursday, April 8, 2021. The Woodgrain Lumber donation, which is double the usual size, has filled up the pantry at the shelter.

## Donations overflowing

Shelter From the Storm receives boon during Sexual Assault Awareness Month

By **ALEX WITTWER**  
The Observer

ISLAND CITY — A successful food drive stocked the pantry at Shelter From the Storm in Island City courtesy of Woodgrain Lumber.

The Idaho-based company delivered nearly 1,500 pounds of food to the local nonprofit that helps survivors of interpersonal violence, lining the pantries and hallways with food and supplies.

Staff at the shelter said it's far more than they were expecting, and they still are determining the best way to store the excess food. The gift came at a time when the pandemic has severely limited fundraising activities.

"It's been pretty rough this year, just because of COVID. We haven't had a whole lot of opportunity to get fundraising done," said Rozzanne Moldovan, a crisis response advocate with Shelter From the Storm. "We've had people who have donated to us personally."

Woodgrain runs a food drive for the shelter each year, usually bringing in around 500-800 pounds of donated goods. This year, they nearly doubled that.



Alex Wittwer/The Observer

A teal ribbon hangs along a lamppost on Adams Avenue, La Grande, Thursday, April 8, 2021. The ribbons are a part of a campaign to raise awareness about sexual assault during the month of April.

Workers at the mill donate the food.

"It's so impressive that they've not only come together and made this happen but also went above and beyond when people are struggling," said Krista Evans, program manager at the shelter.

The donation comes during Sexual Assault Awareness Month, an annual campaign

in April that aims to broaden awareness about sexual assault and prevention and raises funds to support survivors and advocates.

Throughout the month, the shelter plans several events to raise awareness about sexual assault.

The online exhibit "What I

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## La Grande increases ambulance fees

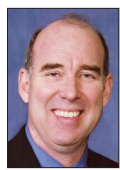
New rates go into effect July 1; council also OKs utility relief program

By **PHIL WRIGHT**  
The Observer

LA GRANDE — Ambulance fees are increasing in the city of La Grande, and residents enduring financial hardship because of the pandemic could get some utility bill relief.

The La Grande City Council during its meeting Wednesday, April 7, voted 7-0 in favor of bumping up ambulance fees, which the council discussed during a work session March 8.

"We have not increased our ambulance fees since 2009," City Manager Robert Strope told the



Strope

council during the Wednesday night meeting, "and the cost of doing business, as everyone knows, continues to go up."

In addition to the new fees, Strope said, the city is implementing one rate for people who are residents of La Grande and a higher rate for those outside the city limits. La Grande residents already are paying property taxes in the city, he said, and providing a "discount" acknowledges that.

The rate for advanced and basic life support has been \$1,000. That is increasing to \$1,950 for nonresidents and to

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Ronald Bond/The Observer, File

La Grande Fire Department's Medic 2 made its debut in 2019, replacing a 1996 model. The city council on Wednesday, April 7, 2021, increased ambulance service fees, the first time in 12 years. The new fees go into effect July 1.

### NEW LA GRANDE AMBULANCE FEES

- Advanced and basic life support \$1,450 for residents, \$1,950 for nonresidents.
- Aid call for residents \$300, for nonresidents \$500
- Special care transport \$2,500.
- Per hour rate for special events increasing to \$200.
- New rates take effect July 1.

For a full list of the fees, visit [www.cityoflagrande.org](http://www.cityoflagrande.org), follow the link under "City Office" to the city council webpage and click on the link under "Recent Council Agenda."

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### WEATHER Full forecast on the back of B section

**Tonight** 22 Low Colder  
**Sunday** 50/22 Plenty of sun

### CONTACT US

541-963-3161

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Email story ideas to [news@lagrandeobserver.com](mailto:news@lagrandeobserver.com).  
More contact info on Page 4A.



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**TUESDAY** SECURE RURAL SCHOOLS

Online at [lagrandeobserver.com](http://lagrandeobserver.com)