

THE OBSERVER

SERVING UNION AND WALLOWA COUNTIES SINCE 1896

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Education

Local school districts OK with state testing

By **DICK MASON**
The Observer

UNION COUNTY — Leaders in some Oregon school districts, including Astoria, are rejecting standardized assessment testing, which normally happens each spring, because of instructional time lost to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Assessment testing still is alive this spring in Union County, however, where all six of its public school districts are conducting it through May. Educators in the districts said they believe the tests provide valuable insight.

“They tell us when we have gaps in our instruction. They drive our instruction,” said Cove School District Superintendent Earl Pettit.

Elgin School District Superintendent Dianne Greif also said assessment test scores are meaningful.

“They help us develop future instructional strategies,” Greif said.

Union County educational leaders agree lost class time is a

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Cook Memorial offers new memberships

Nonresidents can receive full access to library services for \$50 a year

By **PHIL WRIGHT**
The Observer

LA GRANDE — La Grande’s Cook Memorial Library has long offered basic library services to locals living outside La Grande. Starting May 1, nonresidents can purchase memberships that give them access to all of Cook Memorial’s services.

Library Director Kip Roberson explained Cook Memorial Library is making the move to distinguish between who lives inside the city limits of La Grande and who does not.

Residents of La Grande on a per capita basis spend approximately \$50 annually in taxes to support library services,

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Let there be light

New residency program increases La Grande’s status as film mecca

By **ALEX WITTWER**
The Observer

LA GRANDE — The Eastern Oregon Film Festival plans to light up the screen at one of La Grande’s seminal landmarks.

The film festival, which was held only online last year due to the pandemic, aims to serve moviegoers and film buffs a special treat this October — the festival will take place in the Liberty Theatre, the newly renovated historic building that dates back to 1910.

There also will be showings at the performing arts space HQ in downtown La Grande and the newly renovated Loso Hall at Eastern Oregon University. But the Liberty will be the main attraction. With the new venues, new technology will help increase the overall quality of the festival.

“This the first time there’s been a good screen and projector,” said Chris Jennings, the main organizing force behind the EOFF. “We’ve been a grassroots screen for so long, we’ve been hustling projectors. It’ll be great to move to more solid ground.”

Each year, the film festival shows nearly two dozen films ranging from feature-length flicks to bite-sized shorts to the film fanatics of La Grande and Eastern Oregon. Artists from around the country come and speak about their films and their process in creating them.

The pandemic last year posed a challenge to the festival, with the event moving to an online format that didn’t generate as much interest as previous years. Jennings said he is optimistic this year will provide a way for the festival to return stronger than before.

“The challenge is getting people excited again,” he said. “But the future is bright.”

The film selection process, which in previous years involved the members of EOFF coming together and watching back-to-back films over a several-hour period before giving recommendations and discussion, has evolved to fit with the pandemic. Last year members watched on their own or through watch parties via Zoom. This year marked a return of those watch parties and a new addition — a residency program.

Jennings said he wanted even more high-quality talent congregating in La Grande each

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Alex Wittwer/The Observer

Patrons at the Liberty Theatre Cafe sit outside and enjoy a meal Friday, April 23, 2021. The theater is set to open later this year, with a portion of the Eastern Oregon Film Festival taking place in the renovated venue hall.

“We’ve been a grassroots screen for so long, we’ve been hustling projectors. It’ll be great to move to more solid ground.”

— **Chris Jennings**, Eastern Oregon Film Festival organizer

Oregon’s wolf population on the rise

151 of Oregon’s 173 wolves live in Northeastern Oregon

By **JAYSON JACOBY**
Baker City Herald

SALEM — Oregon’s wolf population grew almost 10% during 2020, and 20 of the state’s 22 wolf packs live in the northeast corner of the state.

Those are among the statistics in the annual wolf report the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife released Wednesday, April 21. The report is based on wolf statistics at the end of 2020.

ODFW officials confirmed at least 173 wolves were in the state, an increase of 9.5% from the 158 wolves tallied at the end of 2019.

Those numbers are based on sightings, tracks and photographs from remote cameras, according to ODFW.

ODFW acknowledges there are likely more than 173 wolves living in the state, as not all wolves are seen, or their presence



Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife/Contributed Photo

A remote camera in December 2018 captured this photo of a breeding female of the Wenaha Pack on U.S. Forest Service land in northern Wallowa County. The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife on Wednesday, April 21, 2021, released its annual wolf report, which shows the state has at least 173 wolves, an increase of 9.5% from 2019 to 2020.

confirmed by other evidence, during the annual winter census.

Although two wolf packs and two other groups of wolves are living in the Cascade Mountains or in Central Oregon, a majority

of the state’s wolves inhabit the northeast corner.

That’s been true since wolves started migrating into the state from Idaho about 20 years ago.

“While Northeast Oregon con-

tinues to host majority of state’s wolf population, dispersal to other parts of Oregon and adjacent states continues,” Roblyn Brown, ODFW’s wolf coordinator, said in a press release.

Of the minimum statewide population of 173 wolves, 151 — 87% — are in the northeast corner, including Baker, Umatilla, Union, Wallowa, Grant and Morrow counties.

That region also is home to 20 of the state’s 22 documented wolf packs, according to ODFW. The agency defines a pack as four or more wolves traveling together during winter. Pack populations ranged from four to 15 wolves.

The three biggest packs are all in Northeast Oregon:

- Noregaard Pack, 15 wolves, including six pups born in the spring of 2020 that survived through the end of the year. This pack’s area includes parts of the northern Union, Wallowa and Umatilla counties.
- Five Points Pack, 15 wolves,

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WEATHER Full forecast on the back of B section

	Tonight 38 LOW A shower or two		Sunday 53/33 Cloudy and cool
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Email story ideas to news@lagrandeobserver.com.
More contact info on Page 4A.



TUESDAY

INTEGRATED CARE FACILITY

Online at lagrandeobserver.com