

LIBRARY

Continued from Page 1A

Roberson said, so they receive the full slate of what the library has to offer.

That covers basic library services — borrowing books, magazines and DVDs, attending programs and events, using the public access computers and borrowing e-books and e-audiobooks through Library2Go — as well as enhanced services. Those include access to platforms to stream movies and TV shows, expanded access to e-books and e-audiobooks, online career assistance and borrowing museum passes, Wi-Fi hotspots and Chrome-Kits. Roberson said those streaming services cost the library quite a bit of money each year.

Roberson said some people think of Cook Memorial as the county library, but it is not. Libraries in Baker and Umatilla counties, for example, receive their funding through a library district, and anyone living within the district can receive all the benefits of those libraries. But the Cook Memorial Library is a function of the city of La Grande.

Basic services have been available to library members who live outside the city limits because Union County pays \$40,000 a year to La Grande so county residents can enjoy basic library services.

“They give us that funding to offset the cost of those services,” Roberson said. “No matter where you live, you can come to a story time, you can come to use a computer.”

The more extensive services have not been available to nonresidents of La Grande because they don't pay the taxes that support those services. Starting May 1, however, nonresidents can purchase memberships to gain the full array of services. All-access, nonresident memberships break

COOK MEMORIAL LIBRARY'S NEW MEMBERSHIPS

La Grande's Cook Memorial Library has offered basic library services, including borrowing items and some access to ebooks, to locals living outside La Grande. Starting May 1, nonresidents can purchase memberships that provide the full array of library services, including access to streaming platforms and borrowing ChromeKits.

All-access memberships for nonresidents break down as follows:

- \$20 for one month and a limit of borrowing 12 items at a time
- \$30 for six months
- \$50 for 12 months
- \$100 for 12 months for two or more household members at the same address.

down as follows:

- \$20 for one month and a limit of borrowing 12 items at a time
- \$30 for six months
- \$50 for 12 months
- \$100 for 12 months for two or more household members at the same address

Implementing the change means the library had to clean up its patron database.

Union County's population is about 27,000, but the database at the Cook Memorial Library said there were about 21,000 members with library cards. Roberson said there is no way the library was providing service to such a large chunk of the county's population.

“We have had the system for over 10 years and they brought over all the records from the previous system. We have records that are old in there,” he said.

The database contains names of people who no longer live in the county, he said. Keeping all those records also costs the library money.

Roberson said initially it looked like cleaning up the files would mean canceling every membership Cook Memorial had and asking everyone to rejoin. But Cook Memorial is among the 77 libraries in 15 counties of Eastern and Central Oregon that make up the Sage Library System, which also tracks library patrons. Data in the Sage system, he said, showed Cook Memorial had 9,532 active patrons as of the end of June 2020.

The number of local residents with a library card is an important statistic for libraries, Roberson said,

because that number can affect funding, especially when seeking grants. Out of the library's patrons, he said, almost 2,300 were not residents of La Grande. And those are the memberships that people have to renew.

“We spared our local patrons any pain,” he said. “Unfortunately, there's some pain for the others.”

La Grande residents who are library members will not see changes to their library membership, but they will have to verify contact information. And some could have to renew their card sooner than the three-year expiration date.

Cook Memorial Library card holders living within the city limits of Elgin, North Powder or Union will have to apply for a new library card from their home library because their old La Grande library card no longer will be valid. They will be able to use the new card at Cook Memorial for basic services there.

The most notable membership change will be for residents of Union County who live in communities without a public library: Island City, Cove, Imbler, Summerville and all the unincorporated areas. Anyone there with an existing account will need to convert the membership to a nonresident account, which includes a new library card and barcode number and will give them access to the library's basic services at no cost to themselves.

Roberson, though, recommends upgrading. He said he knows of other libraries that charge more for what Cook Memorial Library provides.

wolf management, said Rodger Huffman, a Northeast Oregon rancher and co-chairman of the Oregon Cattlemen's Association's Wolf Task Force Committee.

Huffman said he and other ranchers believe ODFW's criteria for determining whether wolves attacked livestock are too heavily weighted toward a finding other than confirmation that wolves are responsible.

He said he understands, however, that ODFW officials are under pressure from what Huffman calls the “pro-wolf side,” to not blame wolves for livestock attacks without overwhelming physical evidence.

Huffman said he's not suggesting that agency biologists assume wolves are the culprits in all depredations, but he contends a lower standard would be more reasonable, and better reflect the actual prevalence of wolf attacks on livestock.

He said he knows a rancher in Union County who reported six possible depredations last year, but ODFW confirmed only one. Huffman said the rancher has “lost confidence in the system” as a result.

Although Huffman said he believes wolf populations are increasing faster than ODFW's figures show, an official from Defenders of Wildlife, a group that advocates for the state to protect wolves and encourage their distribution in Oregon, said wolves still are in a relatively tenuous situation in the state.

“This past year has seen a multitude of challenges for wolves in Oregon,” said Sristi Kamal, senior Oregon representative for Defenders of Wildlife. “While increasing wolf numbers are encouraging, long-term recovery is still dependent on addressing multiple threats, including poaching and a push for predator control measures. We have an

opportunity in Oregon to ensure habitat connectivity and establish a landscape where wolves and people are both able to flourish. Defenders of Wildlife is committed to working with agency staff, landowners and ranchers to make this happen.”

According to the ODFW annual report, four wolves were killed illegally in Oregon in 2020. Oregon State Police is investigating three of those cases. The breeding male of the Ruckel Ridge Pack was shot in Umatilla County in May 2020. The breeding male of the Cornucopia Pack was shot in September 2020 in Baker County, and a sub-adult wolf, believed to be from the Pine Creek Pack, was shot in October 2020 in Baker County.

Five other wolves died from different causes during 2020, according to ODFW.

One pup from the Wenaha Pack and a yearling from the Indigo Pack died of natural causes.

A livestock owner shot a wolf that was attacking livestock, one was hit by a car on Interstate 84 in Baker County, and another apparently was killed when it was hit by a boat while swimming across the Snake River.

Monitoring wolves

ODFW captured and fitted tracking collars to 21 wolves during 2020, seven more than in the previous year.

During 2020, the agency tracked 47 wolves, and by the end of the year biologists were still monitoring 34 wolves.

With tracking collar data and information from aerial and ground surveys and remote camera surveillance, ODFW plotted 17,279 separate location points for wolves statewide in 2020. The breakdown by land ownership of those points:

- 57% public lands.
- 38% private lands.
- 5% tribal lands.



Alex Wittwer/The Observer

Jesse Cimon (from left), Ryan Edvalson and Chris Jennings pause for a portrait Friday, April 23, 2021, at the performing arts venue HQ in La Grande. The trio are the organizers behind the Eastern Oregon Film Festival, which is set to take place in October at the newly renovated Liberty Theatre.

EOFF

Continued from Page 1A

year, so he created a new film residency program with the goal of having filmmakers write their screenplays and produce their works in the Grande Ronde Valley, which in turn would promote the region on a grander scale.

In a sense, Jennings is looking for the Eastern Oregon equivalent of “The Goonies” — a way to put La Grande on the map the way the 1985 adventure comedy film raised the profile of Astoria.

The inaugural group of EOFF residents consists of four festival alumni — Alexander Craven, H. Nelson Tracy, Natalie Metzger and Parker Win-

ship — as well as two attendees who are new to Eastern Oregon — Karina Lomelin Ripper and Samantha Crainich.

“They're here,” Jennings said, “with the goal of them coming back in a year to produce those films.”

The filmmakers will stay one month in La Grande at The Lodge at Hot Springs Lake. There, they will spend their time writing their screenplays — hopefully inspired by the region, Jennings said.

“They're going to be touring around. They're here to do location scouting,” Jennings said. “The major stipulation of the residency program was we want to have the screenplay to be the focus. (We want) their time

here to be very thoughtful and creative about how the nuance and the culture and the landscape of the Grande Ronde Valley as a whole can play a role within that story.”

The residents also provide a more tangible boon to the local economy. Jennings said the cohorts will actively engage with the community through small events and visiting restaurants and stores.

“They're willing to come here and invest in the character of La Grande,” he said.

The 2021 Eastern Oregon Film Festival will run Oct. 21-23. For more information, including how to purchase tickets, visit www.eofilmfest.com. Passes for the festival will be available in July.

TESTING

Continued from Page 1A

concern, especially this year after students missed so much instructional time over the past year because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

“After all of the (in-person) school students have missed we value every minute of (traditional) instruction,” said North Powder School District Superintendent Lance Dixon.

La Grande High School is conducting all assessment tests during advisory periods to address the situation, said Principal Brett Baxter. Advisory periods are akin to study labs where students do homework and receive academic help.

“We are not pulling them from an academic class (to take assessment tests),” Baxter said.

The assessment tests this year in Union County and throughout Oregon are fewer in number and shorter than in the past. The U.S. Department of Education allowed the Oregon Department of Education to scale back the testing.

The state education

department first sought permission to waive its requirement for assessment testing this spring. The federal agency rejected that, and ODE amended its request, asking for a testing roll-back. The federal education department approved that.

Dixon noted all parents again have the option to have their sons and daughters exempted from taking assessment tests. The superintendent said many parents will be pulling their children out of testing this spring so they will not miss class time.

“I see a lot of kids opting out,” he said.

The number of 11th graders who end up not taking tests may be especially high because there is no longer an incentive for them to take the assessment tests, which are for English and math. Previously the stakes for the 11th grade assessment tests for the two subjects were enormous because students not passing both were suddenly at risk of not graduating.

State rules stipulate students cannot graduate unless they passed the grade 11 math and

English tests or later provide work samples proving comprehension of the subjects, considered “essential skills.” La Grande School District Director of Education Scott Carpenter said the state has waived its essential skills graduation requirement for the classes of 2021 and 2022. This means this year's sophomores may have to later pass essential skills tests to graduate but not current juniors and seniors.

Assessment test results have been reported in a manner that makes it easy to compare them with other districts across the state. Dixon said he does not think state assessment test results this year will have much comparative value because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

“The test results will be skewed,” Dixon said.

He explained this likely will be because in-person instructional time students have been receiving in 2020-21 varies greatly across the state. Dixon said some districts have been providing in-person instruction for much of the school year while others just started.

OVBC
Oregon Values and Beliefs Center

We want your voice to be a part of the conversations shaping Oregon's future.

Share your opinion. Earn money. Join the OVBC Panel.

panel.oregonvbc.org