

TODAY IN HISTORY

Today is Tuesday, April 27, the 117th day of 2021. There are 248 days left in the year.

TODAY'S HIGHLIGHT IN HISTORY:

On April 27, 1978, 51 construction workers plunged to their deaths when a scaffold inside a cooling tower at the Pleasants Power Station site in West Virginia fell 168 feet to the ground.

ON THIS DATE:

In 1521, Portuguese explorer Ferdinand Magellan was killed by natives in the Philippines.

In 1791, the inventor of the telegraph, Samuel Morse, was born in Charlestown, Massachusetts.

In 1810, Ludwig van Beethoven wrote one of his most famous piano compositions, the Bagatelle in A-minor.

In 1865, the steamer Sultana, carrying freed Union prisoners of war, exploded on the Mississippi River near Memphis, Tennessee; death toll estimates vary from 1,500 to 2,000.

In 1941, German forces occupied Athens during World War II.

In 1973, acting FBI Director L. Patrick Gray resigned after it was revealed that he'd destroyed files removed from the safe of Watergate conspirator E. Howard Hunt.

In 1982, the trial of John W. Hinckley Jr., who shot four people, including President Ronald Reagan, began in Washington. (The trial ended with Hinckley's acquittal by reason of insanity.)

In 1994, former President Richard M. Nixon was remembered at an outdoor funeral service attended by all five of his successors at the Nixon presidential library in Yorba Linda, California.

In 2009, a 23-month-old Mexico City toddler died at Texas Children's Hospital in Houston, becoming the first swine-flu death on U.S. soil.

In 2010, former Panamanian dictator Manuel Noriega was extradited from the United States to France, where he was later convicted of laundering drug money and received a seven-year sentence.

In 2015, rioters plunged part of Baltimore into chaos, torching a pharmacy, setting police cars ablaze and throwing bricks at officers after thousands attended a funeral for Freddie Gray, a Black man who died from a spinal injury he'd suffered in police custody.

Ten years ago: Tornadoes raked the South and Midwest; more than 120 twisters resulted in 316 deaths. An Afghan officer, Col. Ahmed Gul, killed eight U.S. airmen and one U.S. civilian during a meeting at an Afghan air force compound in Kabul; Gul died in an exchange of gunfire that followed his attack.

Five years ago: Former House Speaker Dennis Hastert was sentenced in Chicago to more than a year in prison in a hush-money case that revealed accusations he'd sexually abused teenagers while coaching high school wrestling. Tennessee Gov. Bill Haslam signed a bill allowing mental health counselors to refuse to treat patients based on the therapist's religious or personal beliefs.

Head Start building expansion starting

By **DICK MASON**

The Observer

LA GRANDE — Preliminary work is beginning for the installation of a \$1.6 million building that will expand the capacity of Eastern Oregon University Head Start.

The building will provide EOU Head Start with two classrooms, each with a capacity for at least 20 students, plus five offices. It will be adjacent to the program's La Grande center, 810 14th Street, La Grande.

Work on the foundation of the building is starting. Once the foundation is in, a structure now being built in Western Oregon will be transported to La Grande and installed.

"It should be in by June 15," said Robert Kleng, the director of EOU Head Start.

The addition of the building will put the program in a position to significantly increase the overall number of hours it provides to the 100 children who attend its La Grande center.

Kleng said once the building is in place, EOU Head Start will attempt to



obtain funding from the state to pay for the additional teachers and staff the program needs to provide the extra instructional time to students the new structure

will make possible. Kleng said he is optimistic Head Start will land the funding. He noted Gov. Kate Brown's proposed 2021-23 budget includes significant funding



Alex Wittwer/The Observer

Above, Billy McCallister with Earp's Concrete Finishing & Construction, Island City, speaks with curious children at the site of the Eastern Oregon University Head Start campus on Monday, April 26, 2021. The local company is building the foundation for the EOU Head Start program's \$1.6 million building. At left, McCallister begins setting boards for the new building's foundation.

for expanding preschool education.

"It is very supportive of early learning," Kleng said.

Kleng said he is confident the budget the Legislature eventually approves will include at least as much for expanding preschool programs as Brown's proposed plan.

Kleng said he has not met any legislators who oppose Brown's preschool funding proposals.

"I know of several who want to provide even more funding," he said.

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 also has centers in Elgin, Union and Baker City.

NEWS BRIEFS

62 people show up for Baker County vaccination clinic

BAKER COUNTY — The Baker County Health Department had more than 1,100 doses of COVID-19 vaccine available during a free drive-thru vaccination clinic on Saturday, April 24, at the fairgrounds.

But just 62 people showed up to be inoculated. "It was extremely disappointing," said Baker County Commissioner Mark Bennett, who has served as the county's incident commander during the pandemic.

Almost one-third of the county's 16,800 residents are fully vaccinated (4,401 people) or partially vaccinated (1,120), according to the Oregon Health Authority.

The county's vaccination rate, per 10,000 residents, ranks 20th among Oregon's 36 counties.

Oregon's rural university holds global classes

LA GRANDE — Eastern Oregon University business professor Michael Fields in 2020 created a bridge for his students to connect with Japanese students on a group project. EOU recently reported the relationship continues to grow.

Fields and Kansai University/Institute for Innovative Global Education took up an official partnership in early 2020 to expose both universities to global cultures.

So far, Fields has completed multiple projects with the school since the spring of 2020.

Recognizing this connection expanded his students' cultural awareness, Fields and his class met late at night to accommodate the time difference between

Oregon and Japan.

In the fall, Fields' Business in a Global Environment class worked with Japanese students to create a website or app and marketing plan.

Excited for the potential this partnership has, Fields explained the opportunity is available to all EOU professors. In the future, his Japanese colleagues have voiced interest in forming connections with the English department at EOU.

"For a lot of the students it's their first time really interacting with students or anyone from another country and so it's really just that lightbulb moment, that 'aha' moment that the world is a lot bigger than La Grande and EOU," Fields said.

Even at EOU, Oregon's Rural University, he added, "we still forge these global partnerships and have international work."

Wyden announces online town halls

PORTLAND — U.S. Sen. Ron Wyden announced he will have live online town halls for residents of Morrow, Umatilla, Union, Wallowa and Wasco counties.

The virtual town hall schedule is as follows:

- Morrow County, Saturday, May 1, at 3 p.m.
- Umatilla, Union and Wallowa counties, Sunday, May 2, at 11:30 a.m.
- Wasco County, Sunday, May 2, at 3:30 p.m.

People's Town Hall on Facebook is hosting the town halls. Visit www.facebook.com/PeoplesTH/ for links to each event.

For Oregonians in those counties who want to submit questions for Wyden, visit bit.ly/3axRmUo or email info@peopletownhall.org.

— EO Media Group

Forest officials warn of conditions in Umatilla National Forest

East Oregonian

PENDLETON — Officials with the Umatilla National Forest are warning visitors looking to adventure into the forest as spring begins to use caution or refrain from traveling on forest roads.

Though snow is beginning to recede in the foothills of the Blue Mountains, most roads remain impassible due to snow or mud cause by the melting snowpack, a press release from the Umatilla National Forest said.

"We typically see incidents this time of year where families head up for the day, get stuck, and end up spending the night or making a very long hike out to look for help," said Shane Dittlinger, the recreation program manager for the Umatilla National Forest.

Much of the Blue Mountains also lacks cell-phone service, so officials are advising that people looking to explore the outdoors bring along extra warm clothing, food and water in case they get stuck and have to spend the night in the forest.

Officials also are encouraging visitors to "minimize" their impact on the forest as the weather warms and snow melts and roads become more susceptible to rutting, the press release said.

"Forest roads are not constructed to be all-weather roads, so they can be easily damaged when wet, especially during the spring season," said Shaun Oliver, Umatilla National Forest engineer. "Tire ruts that are just an inch deep can leave lasting impressions that only grow with

rain and erosion."

Although some early-season forest visitors seek "mudding" or "mud-bogging" opportunities, the officials noted "it is illegal to operate a vehicle on or off-road in a manner that damages or unreasonably disturbs land and vegetation."

Officials are asking people who see evidence of damage to report it.

Despite the early accessibility, some roads are closed for wildlife or resource concerns. Others are closed in areas damaged by the 2020 February and May floods.

You can find maps and updates on closures and flood repair activities on the Forest Service website and at any Forest Service office. Closure signs will be posted on the ground, the press release said.

Winding Waters receives windfall of COVID-19 cash

By **RONALD BOND**

Wallowa County Chieftain

ENTERPRISE — The federal American Rescue Plan provided a major financial boost for community health centers. Winding Waters Medical Clinic in Enterprise was among those who received help.

More than \$84 million was allocated to health centers in Oregon through the ARP, Democratic Sen. Jeff Merkley's office announced last month, with Winding Waters receiving more than \$1.2 million.

Nic Powers, CEO of Winding Waters, said he was aware of the money set apart for health centers in the \$1.9 trillion bill, and expected Winding Waters



Winding Waters Medical Clinic/Contributed Photo

Winding Waters Medical Clinic, a community health center in Enterprise, is receiving more than \$1.2 million from the federal American Rescue Plan for COVID-19 relief.

would be able to apply for a grant.

"I absolutely was shocked by the amount," he said of the \$1.210,625 awarded to WWMC. "It was unexpected."

The money was dispersed to 30 centers

in Oregon, with dollar amounts ranging from about \$671,000 to nearly \$11 million. The money, which will be available once WWMC budgets the funds approved by the Bureau of Primary Health Care, is a one-time, two-

year award.

"Over the next two years, this one-time funding will go toward our COVID response efforts, staff development and the tools, equipment and spaces we need," Powers said.

He noted that part of the use for the money will be expansion of services in Joseph and Wallowa, but the uses can be varied, and are more than just COVID response.

Community needs, Powers said, will be heavily in mind as staff and the volunteer board of directors formulate a budget, which it has to turn in by May 31 — 60 days after WWMC was made aware of the award.

Drilling done on Baker City's new well; tests show good water quality

Project costs \$677,000 with goal of producing 2.16 million gallons per day

By **JAYSON JACOBY and SAMANTHA O'CONNOR**

Baker City Herald

BAKER CITY — Baker City's new drinking water well is finished, but considerably more work is needed before it starts putting water into pipes.

The city's contract, Schneider Water Services of St. Paul, near Salem, finished drilling the well last week, said Michelle Owen, the city's public works director.

The company drilled down 654 feet at the site on the east side of the parking lot at the city-

owned Quail Ridge Golf Course at 2801 Indiana Ave., Owen said.

The company had estimated the well, which has a casing 12 inches in diameter, would be about 700 feet deep.

Owen said a brief pumping test showed good water quality.

A liner for the well, which will be custom made, has been ordered and should arrive within a couple weeks, she said.

Schneider Water Services workers will return in May to install the liner and a test pump, finish

pump tests and video the well. They should be finished by early June, Owen said.

The city council voted in April 2020 to hire the company to drill the well, at a cost of \$677,000.

Drilling started in early October 2020, and initial progress was slower than the company expected as the drill encountered thicker layers of clay soils that anticipated based on the drilling logs from an older well elsewhere on the golf course.

The second, and more expensive, phase of the well project will go out for bid soon, Owen said.

The work includes building a well house and

installing the piping to connect the well to the distribution system. That phase will cost an estimated \$2 million. Owen said work likely will start in September 2021.

The well should be available to start delivering water to homes and businesses in the spring of 2022.

Owen said the goal is for the well to produce about 1,500 gallons per minute, approximately 2.16 million gallons per day.

The city will use the well during the summer, when water demand peaks but the volume from the streams and springs in the city's watershed drops. The well will also be

beneficial in some years during spring, when rapidly melting snow in the watershed, which is in the Elkhorn Mountains west of town, can temporarily cloud streams with silt.

The new well is one of the major projects that prompted the city council to boost water rates by 10% in 2016, 2017 and 2018.

Those increases will pay for the well and for the continuation of a long-term effort to replace the century-old, leaky concrete pipeline that brings water to town from the city's watershed.

The new well will be the city's second. The other well, which

the city drilled in 1977 near its water treatment plant and reservoir on the hill near Reservoir Road, is about 800 feet deep.

Owen said the new well, like the existing one, will be part of the city's aquifer storage and recovery system.

Baker City was the first Oregon city to receive a state permit allowing it to divert water from surface sources — the watershed streams and springs — into a well during the winter when the watershed produces far more water than the city needs.

That water is stored in the well aquifer and can be pumped later into the city's distribution system.