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Three vie for one position on Imbler School Board

By DICK MASON
The Observer

IMBLER — The race for Position 3 on the Imbler School Board has a distinction — it has the largest candidate field of any school board race in Union County.

Three candidates are vying for the seat, one of only four contested school board races in the county.

Those running are Joseph “Joe” Fisher Jr., a building official; Tim Phelps, a sales and marketing director; and Bud Whitcomb, the owner and operator of a custom body and paint shop. Dan McDonald, the incumbent, did not file for reelection.

Fisher, who lives in Summerville, filed for Position 3 to reach out to his community.

“I want to do what is best for the kids in our school district,” said Fisher, who works for the city of La Grande’s building department.

Fisher and his wife, Wendi, are

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Turning back hands of time

Union County Museum opens Sunday, May 9, with new display of old clocks

By DICK MASON
The Observer

UNION — The Union County Museum, a place where exhibits are seemingly frozen in time, is gaining a display that may melt the hearts of vintage clock lovers.

It is Merle’s Time and Chime, a display of old timepieces the public can see for the first time on Sunday, May 9, when the Union County Museum opens for its spring and summer season.

The display will have about 30 clocks, the oldest of which are a wooden wheel clock made in 1760 and a shelf clock produced in 1820, said Merle Miller of La Grande who donated most of the clocks for the display.

“Clocks will last a long time if they are taken care of,” said Miller, a certified master watchmaker who owned a La Grande clock repair shop, Merle’s Time

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Tamping down COVID-19

EOU partners up for vaccination clinic

By ALEX WITTWER
The Observer

LA GRANDE — Eastern Oregon University hosted a COVID-19 vaccination clinic Tuesday, May 4, that drew almost 100 students, faculty and staff to the La Grande campus to receive their first dose of the Moderna vaccine.

The effort comes as vaccination rates around the country climb while cases county-wide continue to remain low. COVID-19 infection rates have fallen to just under 72 cases per 100,000 residents, according to the Oregon Health Authority, marking a steady decline since the county reopened businesses in late February of this year.

The clinic at Quinn Coliseum’s practice gym was a partnership between the university and the Center for Human Development. Many of the attendees said they learned about the clinic through an EOU email.

“I just want to get back to a sense of normalcy, like everybody does,” said Sammi Spriet, a sophomore at the university who received her vaccine at Tuesday’s clinic.

Among the attendees at the pop-up clinic was Monty the Mountaineer, the mascot for EOU, in full garb with an oversized face mask. Monty has been making appearances at several vaccination clinics throughout the past week to help drive up awareness and social media presence.

Supply of the vaccines in the county remains steady, CHD officials said. Their supply is kept to a seven-day maximum of around 1,000 doses in accordance with Oregon Health Authority directives and is replenished as residents show up to receive their doses.

“In general, our vaccine supply in the state has caught up with demand at this point,” said Carrie Brogoitti, public health administrator for CHD. “We’ve been getting adequate vaccines to cover the appointments that are made. If people want the vaccine, they should be able to get it.”

The story is similar across the state — demand for the vaccine has stabilized and the logistical challenge of making sure enough doses remain on hand has eased.

“We have not been needing to receive large supplies (of vaccine) like we were in the

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Alex Wittwer/The Observer

Robert Fox, a graduate student at Eastern Oregon University, prepares to receive his first dose of the COVID-19 vaccine at a clinic Tuesday, May 4, 2021, in the Quinn practice gym on campus.



Alex Wittwer/The Observer

Trevor Anger sanitizes chairs in the Quinn practice gym at Eastern Oregon University, La Grande, on Tuesday, May 4, 2021. The university, in partnership with the Center for Human Development, hosted a vaccination clinic for staff, students and faculty to receive their first dose of a COVID-19 vaccine.

“We’ve been getting adequate vaccines to cover the appointments that are made. If people want the vaccine, they should be able to get it.”

— Carrie Brogoitti, local public health administrator

Little homes in the valley offer shelter, hope

La Grande home builder looks to help local housing shortage

By ALEX WITTWER
The Observer

LA GRANDE — A local home builder is offering a small solution to a countywide housing problem — tiny homes.

Megan Fehrenbacher, owner of Mega Tiny Homes in La Grande, has been building tiny homes for just over two years, starting out with a small cottage she built after a friend’s retreat burned down in Tollgate.

Fehrenbacher said the business has an important role in not only building affordable homes for the community, but as a form of rehabilitation. She said she had grown frustrated with substance abuse treatment centers, which she saw as a retreat that did not prepare its graduates for life after therapy.

“I wanted to start a work rehab, where they don’t just go to rehab and talk about themselves,”



Alex Wittwer/The Observer

Megan Fehrenbacher poses for a portrait on Friday, April 30, 2021, in front of one of her tiny homes in her La Grande warehouse. Fehrenbacher’s company has been building homes in La Grande for the last two years, among a surge of interest in tiny homes.

Fehrenbacher said.

The inspiration comes from her son, who she said struggled with substance abuse disorders in the past. Now, she’s helping to build futures.

“My son went through 18 rehabs,” said Fehrenbacher, noting the most beneficial to her son’s health were work rehabs, where he would spend time on farms or recycling centers

working and building up his marketable skills.

“All of the other rehabs, he would get out and nobody wanted him,” Fehrenbacher said. “I said to myself, I can do this better.”

She built her first tiny home with the assistance of Stacey Bowman, who now works for Mega Tiny Homes.

“I learned a lot,” Fehrenbacher said.

Navigating through the codes and requirements of homebuilding, such as proper electrical work, was a challenge for the fledgling homebuilder. Still, orders began coming in.

Her first order was for 60 houses. However, the order was a sham, with the buyer fronting the money for only five houses. Fehrenbacher was wary and able to keep her business from going into excess debt.

Tiny homes, which have experienced a huge increase in support over the past decade, have attracted young homeowners and elderly alike. The

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WEATHER

Full forecast on the back of B section	
Tonight	Friday
43 LOW	56/38
Partly cloudy	Cloudy and cooler

CONTACT US

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Email story ideas to news@lagrandeobserver.com.
More contact info on Page 4A.



SATURDAY

LA GRANDE CORRIDOR PLANS

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