

TODAY IN HISTORY

Today is Saturday, May 8, the 128th day of 2021. There are 237 days left in the year.

TODAY'S HIGHLIGHT IN HISTORY:

On May 8, 1984, the Soviet Union announced it would boycott the upcoming Summer Olympic Games in Los Angeles.

ON THIS DATE:

In 1541, Spanish explorer Hernando de Soto reached the Mississippi River.

In 1846, the first major battle of the Mexican-American War was fought at Palo Alto, Texas; U.S. forces led by Gen. Zachary Taylor were able to beat back Mexican forces.

In 1886, Atlanta pharmacist John Pemberton began selling the original version of Coca-Cola, which he'd invented.

In 1915, Regret became the first filly to win the Kentucky Derby.

In 1945, President Harry S. Truman announced on radio that Nazi Germany's forces had surrendered, and that "the flags of freedom fly all over Europe."

In 1973, militant American Indians who had held the South Dakota hamlet of Wounded Knee for 10 weeks surrendered.

In 1978, David R. Berkowitz pleaded guilty in a Brooklyn courtroom to murder, attempted murder and assault in connection with the "Son of Sam" shootings that claimed six lives and terrified New Yorkers.

In 1987, Gary Hart, dogged by questions about his personal life, including his relationship with Miami model Donna Rice, withdrew from the race for the Democratic presidential nomination.

In 1996, South Africa took another step from apartheid to democracy by adopting a constitution that guaranteed equal rights for Blacks and whites.

Ten years ago: Relations between Egypt's Muslims and Christians reached a new low after overnight riots left 12 people dead and a church burned. Fox television announced that Paula Abdul would be one of the judges on "The X Factor," reuniting her with former "American Idol" judge Simon Cowell (however, Abdul's stint did not last beyond the premiere season of the new talent show).

Search for missing Idaho woman is May 8 and 9

Umatilla County Sheriff's Office asks nonresidents to stay out of the search area



Oregon State Police /Contributed Photo

The Observer

MEACHAM — Umatilla County Search and Rescue and Oregon State Police are coordinating a multi-agency search Saturday and Sunday, May 8-9, near Meacham for Deborah Hendrichs, the 56-year-old woman from Star, Idaho, who went missing in the area on Jan. 11.

The search will concentrate on areas surrounding the eastbound side of Interstate 84 near milepost 238, where her abandoned vehicle was found after

she was reported missing, according to a press release from the Umatilla County Sheriff's Office. Search areas include portions along I-84, Hancock Road, the railroad and bridge and area creeks, bodies of water and

wooded land. The objective of this search is to locate any remains of Hendrichs or any items she may have had with her at the time of her disappearance.

"This will be a robust search response with multiple agencies involved," the release stated. "Approximately 90 personnel have committed to assist in the search, including possibly 10 K-9 teams, four drones and about 35 ground searchers. The actual number will not be known until participants check in on Saturday morning."

The sheriff's office also is asking the general public to remain out of the area unless they are residents and requesting that hunters with spring turkey or bear tags be aware there are searchers in the area and to choose an alternate

hunt location during those days. And locals living in the area, especially near Meacham Lake, should be aware the search will use four drones.

"The drones will not be concentrating on occupied areas or invading privacy of homes or curtilage," according to the press release. "They will be concentrating on areas away from occupied buildings and bodies of water. Searchers on the ground will also be staying away from occupied homes and curtilage, however if a home appears to have been vacant throughout the winter or looks broken into, they will notify the land owner in an attempt to eliminate any possibility that she entered an unoccupied residence or structure seeking assistance."

Personnel with the Oregon Department of Transportation and Union Pacific Railroad have provided a liaison to ensure safety of the search personnel because the area includes the interstate and railroad lines. ODOT also provided the location for an incident command post.

Union Pacific Railroad, Cunningham Sheep Company and Hancock Timber Resource Group have been contacted and are cooperating with searchers because these businesses own a large portion of the search area.

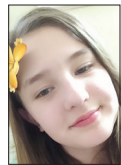
Sheriff's Lt. Sterrin Ward said the project includes the development of a website on this mission at sterrinward.wixsite.com/website. The website also is where the mission will provide updates.

Young Union essay writer a national finalist

By DICK MASON

The Observer

UNION — A first-person narrative is propelling a young Union essay writer to first place finishes she may never forget.



Shoemaker

Sawyer Shoemaker is a national finalist in the sixth-grade division of the 2021 Daughters of the American Revolution American History Essay Contest after winning a trio of competitions.

"This is so exciting," the student said.

Sawyer, 12, submitted her essay Dec. 19, 2020, to the regional Lone Pine Tree Chapter of the DAR. The essay only won state but placed first at the district level, making her a national finalist.

"I was really surprised," said Sawyer, a homeschooled student who is the daughter of Lance and Stephanie Shoemaker.

The essay the sixth grader wrote was a first-person account of what she believes, based on her research, it would have been like to have been at the scene of the Boston Massacre on March 5, 1770, when British troops fired

upon colonists who were harassing them, killing five. One of the victims of the shooting on King Street in Boston was 17-year-old Samuel Maverick, who died the next morning.

Sawyer wrote about the Boston Massacre, which led to the American Revolutionary War, through the eyes of a fictitious character she placed at the scene, 12-year-old Jane Maverick. The shooting would have been a family tragedy for Jane because she was Samuel Maverick's sister in Sawyer's fictional account.

Sawyer spent about 10 hours on her essay project.

"I spent a lot of time doing research," she said.

The sixth grader said learning about the American Revolution through her research has been fascinating.

"It did not come about all at once," the student said. "There was a lot of chaos."

The DAR American History Essay Contest is for students in grades five to eight. There are separate competitions for each grade level reach year.

The national winners will receive a certificate, a medal and a monetary award, according to the DAR's website.

Friends of Scouting Breakfast moves outdoors this year

The Observer

LA GRANDE — The COVID-19 pandemic will not get the best of the annual Friends of Scouting Breakfast.

The fundraiser for local Boy Scouts, normally an indoor event during the first week of February, will instead happen outdoors on June 9, from 6:30-7:45 a.m., at the pavilion at La Grande's Riverside Park. The breakfast features eggs Benedict, scrambled eggs and an assortment of other items.

This year's event will follow the appropriate COVID-19 restrictions and guidelines in effect on June 9.

Having the breakfast outdoors makes it much easier to meet COVID-19 social distancing rules, said Eric Valentine, a Boy Scout volunteer who is helping organize the breakfast.

Eagle Scouts Nate Bingham and Cole McLean will share their leadership experiences in scouting at the breakfast. Those attending will have the opportunity to visit with many of this year's Eagle Scouts and view their project displays. Memorabilia and photos from



Eric Valentine/Contributed Photo

Chris Panike, right, speaks in February 2020 at the annual Friends of Scouting Breakfast in La Grande after receiving the Gene Palmer Eagle Within Award on behalf of his wife, Linda Panike, a longtime scouting volunteer. The 2021 event will take place outdoors on June 9 at the Riverside Park Pavilion.

past scouting activities in Union County also will be exhibited.

The Friends of Scouting Breakfast is an annual fundraiser for the Scouts BSA program where businesses, civic-minded residents and scouting families can support the scouting program in the area.

The cost of the breakfast is \$25 per person. People who are plan-

ning to attend should RSVP by June 1 to let the event organizers know how many will be in their group. To RSVP, call 541-963-4650 and leave a message or go online to www.bsau.org.

Contributors who would rather mail a check should make it payable to Blue Mountain Council and mail it to Jeff Crews, PO Box 656, La Grande 97850.

CORRECTION

The children of Jason Beck, a candidate for Position 5 on the Imbler School Board, attend school in the Elgin School District. The Observer in the May 4 edition stated the wrong school district in a story that started on page 1A. The Observer in one instance in the same article misspelled the name of Imbler School Board Position 5 candidate Lavar Bowles. The Observer regrets the errors.

Wyden talks mental health, farms and more at town hall

EO Media Group

PENDLETON — Mental health issues and protections for family farms were some of the starter topics during a virtual town hall Oregon Sen. Ron Wyden held Sunday, May 2, for residents of Umatilla, Union and Wallowa counties.

The Democrat broached the topic during the first question of the day, asked by Umatilla School District Superintendent Heidi Sipe, about federal support for students as the country rethinks "nearly every aspect of education" following the pandemic.

Wyden addressed standardized testing, saying this year it seems best for teachers to address learning loss in the classroom rather than taking time out for standardized testing. He said schools will need additional funding to help students catch up after lost learning opportunities, and pointed out the American Rescue Plan includes funding for schools to do just that through summer learning opportunities and other strategies. He said he is also concerned about students' mental health and wanted to see funding to adequately address those needs.

"I am very troubled by where we are with respect to mental health services, particularly for children, (and for) seniors in rural areas," he said. "The mental health claims as a result of the pandemic have gone through the stratosphere."



EO Media Group, File

Oregon Sen. Ron Wyden held a virtual town hall Sunday, May 2, 2021, for residents of Umatilla, Union and Wallowa counties.

He revisited the topic after a question by Umatilla County Commissioner George Murdock, who said he was hearing from police who want to "get out of the mental health business" and wanted to know what Wyden was doing to address that issue.

Wyden said he knows police don't want to be forced into acting as mental health counselors, but mental health professionals also don't want to be forced into acting as police. So he has been pushing in the last year for Congress to pass the CAHOOTS Act, modeled after a program funded in Eugene, that would fund partnerships between law enforcement and mental health professionals to form joint 24/7 crisis response teams. One billion dollars in seed money for a CAHOOTS-like program reimbursed through Medicaid was included in the American Rescue Plan.

Wyden said the topic is

personal for him, because the Wyden household spent many years worried about the safety of his brother, who had schizophrenia and was often wandering the streets late at night.

Wallowa County Commissioner John Hillock expressed his concerns with President Joe Biden's plan to conserve 30% of U.S. land by 2030. The federal government already owns 59% of Wallowa County, Hillock said, "a whopping 1.1 million beautiful acres." He asked the senator if he would support a plan in Biden's project to create community-owned forests instead of federally-owned forests that would achieve the same goals but under local control.

Wyden said he considers this "a really innovative idea," and while Biden's plan has targets, it's the nut and bolts action to get there.

"In my view, any proposal has got to have local engagement," Wyden said.

"Local involvement has got to be at the front of it ... to make sure communities are engaged and are consulted in a fair and transparent way."

Wyden continued, saying he liked this idea of converting private forestland into a community forest project. He said the USDA already has the Community Forest Program that can help local governments get grants to buy forestland.

And as chairman of the Senate Finance Committee, he said he would look into this concept.

Amanda Hoey, CEO of the Oregon Wheat Growers League, asked what protections could be on the table when it comes to estate and capital gains taxes and to ensure one generation of Oregon farmers can pass their farm and equipment to the next.

Wyden said Biden has not proposed changes to the estate tax, but his proposed changes to taxing capital gains involves what happens when someone dies and specifically exempts family farms. And that proposal, Wyden said, targets billionaires who can pass on massive wealth.

He said the larger issue is the two taxes systems the U.S. has — one for billionaires who can postpone and put off taxes, and another for working Americans who pay taxes with every paycheck. Wyden said he would change that, and keep family farms at the forefront of that effort.

More fiber internet options coming to Wallowa County

By RONALD BOND

Wallowa County Chieftain

ENTERPRISE — Enterprise residents will have a high-speed internet option in place by the end of the summer.

The company that bought out Frontier Communications last year, Zply Fiber, recently announced plans to extend "gig-speed" fiber internet to Enterprise, one of 22 markets it plans to get into this year, according to a press release.

Construction is ongoing in and around Enterprise, and company COO Brian Stading said he anticipates Zply enabling some 1,300 homes and businesses in the town with the fiber optic option this year.

"This is a brand-new move for Enterprise," he said. "We are currently constructing (the network). We have the process going on to light up businesses and homes in Enterprise."

Stading said part of getting the fiber into Wallowa County includes connecting the isolated area to regions where the network is already in place.

"We have to expand our fiber backbone that connects Enterprise to other markets," he said. "We basically have to expand our fiber network

into Enterprise and then add additional equipment that makes the fiber work."

The COO added there are some fiber connections in place in the town, and efforts are in place to improve what is there too.

"We basically are working on that as well," he said.

A 1-gig speed option will be among those made available once the fiber is laid — one that is 10 times faster than Zply's next-highest option of 100-megabyte service.

"Put it this way: It's a lot of speed," Stading said.

Stading said the hope is for Zply to be connected to the entire town by the end of the summer. From there, the company can look at its options on potential expansion into the rest of the county.

"Once we build out Enterprise, it allows us to look further out once we are there and see what makes sense," Stading said.

Zply's expansion is adding a component Stading indicated is vital to the area.

"Broadband is imperative to people's lives," he said. "We think that (it) will hopefully provide a huge economic benefit to Enterprise."