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SERVING UNION AND WALLOWA COUNTIES SINCE 1896

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County may add law enforcement officers

Proposed 2021-22 budget calls for additions to Union County Sheriff's Office

By **DICK MASON**
The Observer

LA GRANDE — The Union County Sheriff's Office may add five full-time law enforcement positions in 2021-22.

Union County's budget committee is considering recommending a proposed 2021-22 total budget of \$50.01 million for adoption, one which does not call for personnel cuts or program reductions and adds four corrections officers and one reentry officer.

The corrections officers would work at the Union County Jail, which is understaffed, according to Union County Sheriff Cody Bowen. The addition of the four officers would allow the jail to have three full-time corrections officers on duty at all times. Presently, the jail has two officers on duty for each shift, said Shelley Burgess, the administrative/budget officer for Union County.

Presently, not all of the

See, **Budget**/Page 5A

Oregon is operating in new reality

Vaccinations, not cases, are now key for counties to lower risk level

By **GARY A. WARNER**
Oregon Capital Bureau

SALEM — The Medford area has less than half the number of COVID-19 cases than the Bend area.

But restaurants in Deschutes County can have twice as many customers as Jackson County's in their dining rooms starting Thursday, May 27.

The virus is spreading at twice the rate in Portland than in La Grande.

But last call will be about a half hour before lights out at 11 p.m. in Union County bars, while down at the Moda Center in Multnomah County, people can be packed together without masks at an NBA playoff game.

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Alex Wittwer/The Observer

Geneva Williams places a sketch of Jesus on the wall along with Bibles, ledgers, memorials and other historical records of the former Union United Church on Tuesday, May 25, 2021. The building is now the home of the Catherine Creek Community Center. The memorial site opens May 30 and aims to honor the history of the former congregation.

Preserving memories

Group creates memorial to honor Union Methodist Church's long history

By **DICK MASON**
The Observer

UNION — The former Methodist Church building complex in Union is beginning a new chapter in its 106-year history.

The north Main Street complex, now named the Catherine Creek Community Center, is no longer linked to the Methodist Church after being purchased by the Friends of the Historic Union Community Hall, which bought it from the Oregon-Idaho Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church in February.

The complex's more than 100-year link to the Methodist Church will never be forgotten, however. The Friends of the Historic Union Community Hall are making sure of it.

The group is creating a memorial site in the back wall of the former Methodist Church chapel honoring individuals and families who have been a part of the church's long history in Union.

"We all think this is very important," said Carolyn Young, a volunteer with Friends of the Historic Union Community Hall.

Young, of La Grande, was among about half a dozen volunteers who met in the old church Tuesday, May 25, to sort through its archives and select items for the memorial display.



Alex Wittwer/The Observer

LaVon Hall places a figurine of Mary on a memorial wall in the former Union United Methodist Church on Tuesday, May 25, 2021. Hall, along with Etta Ruberg, Mary Dodds, Geneva Williams, Carolyn Young and Linda McReynolds, spent the afternoon sorting through record books and antiques from the church. The group, which is composed of remaining members of the former congregation, wanted to ensure that the community center would have a way to show its history for visitors.

Their work is also saluting the complete history of the Methodist Church in Union, which dates back to the 1860s when its members met in local homes. The church's first building was constructed in 1873 and still exists today

after being restored at central Main Street.

Later, the north Main Street building, constructed in 1904, served

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Commissioners declare drought emergency

By **BILL BRADSHAW**
Wallowa County Chieftain

ENTERPRISE — A state of drought was declared in Wallowa County during an emergency session of the Wallowa County Board of Commissioners Friday, May 21 — ironically, on one of the rainiest days of the year so far.

"Yeah, we're declaring drought on the rainiest day of the year," Commissioner Todd Nash said.

The emergency session was held to get the process started toward making U.S. Department of Agriculture funding avail-

able primarily to agriculture and ag-related businesses.

"The reason for this emergency meeting is to meet the time frame for submittal of our drought declaration to the state so they can move it forward to the water department, which is the reason we're having an emergency session rather than doing it in regular session," Commissioner Susan Roberts said.

The next regularly scheduled commissioners' meeting is not until June 2.

See, **Drought**/Page 5A



Bill Bradshaw/Wallowa County Chieftain

A pivot line irrigates alfalfa hay in the Wallowa Valley on May 24, 2021. The Wallowa County Board of Commissioners declared a state of drought May 21 during an emergency session.

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WEATHER

Full forecast on the back of B section	
 Tonight	 Friday
43 Low	63/36
Partly cloudy	Cooler

CONTACT US

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Email story ideas to news@lagrandeobserver.com.
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SATURDAY

EOU STANDOUT CONTINUES CAREER IN UTAH

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