

SHOW

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Miller Xtreme Bulls competition is conducted.

Carnival rides will be provided June 10-12, from 3-9 p.m. Thursday, 2-9 p.m. Friday, and 1-9 p.m. Saturday. Wristbands for rides can be purchased on site or for a discount at Union Market in Union and at D & B Supply in Island City.

The Ed Miller Xtreme Bulls competition, an annual event at the Livestock Show, will start at 6:30 p.m. Thursday. Forty Professional Rodeo Cowboy Association bull riders from throughout the United States will compete for a \$10,000 purse and Xtreme tour PRCA points, which improve their world rankings, Cassie Miller said.

Events continue June 11 with the annual Eastern Oregon Livestock Show parade at 2 p.m. that runs down Union's Main Street. William "Bill" Teeter, an Imbler mint farmer, will serve as the parade's grand marshal. Teeter has many years of experience as a EOLS volunteer and has served on its board as second vice president, first vice president and president. He previously served on the Imbler School Board for eight years and on the Summer-ville Cemetery Board for many years, according to the EOLS website.

People can still enter the parade. Sign-up forms are available at the EOLS

website, www.easternoregonlivestockshow.com.

The annual PRCA rodeo and pari-mutuel horse racing begins June 11 at 4 p.m. The rodeo and horse races continue June 12 at 2 p.m. and June 13 at 1:30 p.m.

Musical entertainment will be provided June 12 by the Wasteland Kings, a popular Northeastern Oregon band that has been playing through the region for 10 years. The Wasteland Kings' concert will start around 6 p.m. soon after the rodeo and pari-mutuel horse racing sessions are over. The band will play at the EOLS track where a stage will be placed.

Features available to children at the Livestock Show include the Kid's Corral in the Ken Knott Barn where there will be many activities for kids to enjoy, Miller said. The Kid's Corral opens at 4 p.m. June 11 and 2 p.m. June 12.

Rodeo tickets may be purchased online at the EOLS website or at the gate. Miller said this is the first year that tickets have been sold online and that EOLS officials are making sure a substantial number of tickets will also be available for walk-up customers. She explained this is because some people may feel uncomfortable buying tickets online or not have internet access at home.

"We want to make things as convenient as possible for everyone coming," Miller said.

TRAIL

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other association members and local volunteers.

According to Sean Chambers, now in his 10th year as Union County Parks coordinator at MERA, these trails would not be nearly as developed without volunteer help.

"It's a lot of work. Volunteers just have a different lens they're looking at this place through, that me and the managing agency don't see, so it keeps us well rounded in what we're providing," he said.

The recreation area contains 45 miles of motorized trails and 45 miles of nonmotorized trails, all of which require consistent maintenance and work to ensure riders and hikers are safe and comfortable in the area.

Mark Barber, organizer of the work day and member of the ATV association, started the annual day of work six years ago when he saw the amount of upkeep that could be accomplished with more volunteers.

"We've had anywhere from four to 12 people show up, and that's about the most we can round up most years, because everybody wants to ride and not work," he said. "The trails are all volunteer maintained and most of the single track is volunteer made, and nobody is up there taking care of it."

Most of the year, Chambers and a seasonal worker are the only employees maintaining the trails, making the work day a big opportunity to make and expand new trails.

"Progress has been really good. On the motorcycle trail there is a highly motivated group," Chambers said. "They built that trail system themselves, so

it's really impressive."

The main goal for June 5 was to build a trail connector between two motorcycle trails, which expanded the overall perimeter of the trail system that Chambers planned out years ago. Each year, about 2 miles of new trails have been developed, according to Chambers.

"We're just always grateful to have volunteers out here," he said. "It helps a lot and it means a lot."

The land containing the Mount Emily Recreation Area was privately owned timberland that was going to be sold in 2008 in 240-acre parcels until a local organization campaigned against the deal, citing its potential for recreational and educational use. After receiving support from organizations including the Oregon State Parks and Recreation Department, the ATV Grant Program and the Blue Mountain Habitat Restoration Grant Program, Union County bought the land for almost \$500,000.

In 2019, the Coalition for Recreational Trails awarded MERA the Recreational Trails Program Achievement Award, a national recognition given for the park's multiple-use management and corridor sharing.

Without volunteer work, the trail system would not be nearly as successful as it is today, according to Barber. He said he looks forward to keeping the work day event alive and gaining more attention for future volunteers.

"If everybody put in one day of work, we would have a fantastic trail system," Barber said. "Just one day a year. It's not like you have to be up here every week, but if everybody did one day of work, then we would have the best trail system around."



Alex Wittwer/The Observer

La Grande High School graduating seniors relax and listen to speakers during their commencement ceremony Saturday, June 5, 2021, in the school's gymnasium.

LHS: 'The world is already a better place because of you'

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Grande Superintendent George Mendoza during his speech.

For Mendoza, this year's graduating class was special not only because of his position with the school district, but because his son, Cristian, graduated with the Class of 2021.

The superintendent praised the school district, community and LHS faculty for getting the high school back to in-person learning. He noted many communities and schools across Oregon were unable to overcome obstacles in the way that La Grande did during the 2020-21 school year.

Guest speakers give words of wisdom

La Grande Middle School teacher Klel Carson was requested by the students to be the ceremony's guest speaker. Carson credited the seniors as the most adaptable class of all time and noted he had never seen a class have three first days of school in their



Alex Wittwer/The Observer

Jack Seydel claps for his peers Saturday, June 5, 2021, during La Grande High School's graduation ceremony in the school's gymnasium.

senior year.

"It's been a year that you will never forget and neither will anyone else," Carson said in his speech.

A longtime community member, Carson noted seeing some of his closest friends in the audience and in the graduating class.

Kevin Cahill, a teacher at La Grande for more than 30 years, gave the guest of honor speech. Cahill reflected on the passage of time throughout the speech and cherished seeing the graduates live out important moments in

their lives.

Achievements and recognitions

Many students wore cords or medallions to signify their accomplishments, organizations, national honors society membership and pathway studies.

More than 80 students were recognized as pathways endorsement recipients, studying in programs that focus on career learning opportunities.

For students attending higher education following

graduation, the list of colleges and universities being attended stretches far and wide. From staying close to home at Eastern Oregon University to traveling to Duke University in North Carolina, the Class of 2021 casts a broad net.

Turning the tassels

Despite hurdles to the class's learning and personal experiences, the turning of tassels drew a sense of achievement and relief from the students and audience members.

Senior Class President Hayden Robinson and school board student representative Kobe Cooper stood on stage and announced the moment as the Class of 2021 officially graduated. Caps flew high in the air as the pandemic senior year became a thing of the past.

"The world is already a better place because of you," LHS Principal Baxter told the graduating class. "I'm confident that you will continue to make a positive impact with your chosen paths."

WILDFIRE

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perimeter control.

"It's too early and the conditions and outlooks are not favorable, so we are going to keep the fires to minimum sizes and durations," he said.

Anderson listed valuable rangeland grazed by public land allotment permittees as at risk from the fires as well as infrastructure and recreational and cultural resources, while Mitch Thomas of the BLM, who helped oversee the Joseph Canyon Fire, said some of the area within that footprint includes areas of ecological, cultural and geologic concern.

The troops on the ground are some of the Northwest's most experienced firefighters — smokejumpers, hot shots, and helicopter rappellers — all accustomed to being dispatched to the roughest, least accessible terrain.

Joe Hessel, ODF Northeast Oregon forester, said the two fires were managed the first few days by four agencies in two states. He said coordination among the agencies is working well due to long-standing relationships with each



U.S. Forest Service/Contributed Photo

The Joseph Canyon Fire, which was first reported Friday, June 4, 2021, by June 7 has burned 4,000 acres.

other and landowners.

"Our goal is to catch these fires as quickly as we can," he said.

Ahead of Team 7's arrival, La Grande Unit Forester Logan McCrae served as the Joseph Canyon Fire's operations chief. He said on June 5 the fire was burning actively until dark on all flanks. He said as much as 90% of the fireline had been scouted and crews had a successful burnout operation between Cottonwood Creek and the fire to decrease fuels and reduce fire severity.

As of the morning of June 7, the Joseph Creek Fire had consumed 4,000 acres.

Firefighters have little success with Dry Creek Fire

McCall, Idaho, smoke-jumper Jason Foreman was the initial incident commander on the Dry Creek Fire. He said he and crew members jumped the Dry Creek Fire at 2 p.m. June 4 and watched it grow from 20 acres to 200 acres.

"We had little success initially due to fire behavior," he said.

Zach Tayer, a Wallowa County-based Forest Service firefighter, served as the operations chief ahead of the transfer to Team 7. He said two hot shot crews, nine rappellers and two

helicopters were working on the fire's northern division, using the Downy Gulch Road to contain the blaze.

On the Hilo Division, Tayer said firefighters were securing the north edge and working east near Cook Creek.

At risk on the national forest are a handful of grazing allotments. Tayer said cows grazing on Rye Ridge, southwest of the Dry Creek Fire, were removed from their pasture for safety.

Crews are camped all around the fires' perimeters, Tayer said. Food and supplies are driven in or delivered via helicopter. In some cases the staging areas are a two-hour drive from Enterprise.

Crews were able to make some headway on the two fires June 6 as temperatures dropped, humidity rose and winds died down. Tayer said the goal was to get as much headway on the fire before temperatures warm up later this week.

Forecasted rain on June 9 would also give crews the upper hand on the roughly 1,600-acre Dry Creek Fire.

"We should make headway in the next 72 hours," Tayer said.

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