

# THE OBSERVER

SERVING UNION AND WALLOWA COUNTIES SINCE 1896

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WALLOWA COUNTY

## Joseph Canyon and Dry Creek fires dying down

Cooler weather and precipitation aid in mopping up nearly 10,000 acres

By **KATY NESBITT**  
For the Observer

ENTERPRISE — The early beginning of Oregon's wildfire season was brief, but spectacular. Just one day after the Inter-agency Team 7 overhead team assumed command of

the Joseph Canyon and Dry Creek fires, crews and air support are being released.

The release of the Type 1 helicopters and most of the crews was announced at Team 7's Tuesday, June 8, planning meeting at Wallowa County Fairgrounds'

Cloverleaf Hall, Enterprise, indicating the fire was winding down.

The Joseph Canyon Fire was 60% contained as of June 9. The latest mapping of the fire revealed it burned much more than previously measured — 7,610 acres, primarily on private and Nez Perce Tribe land. Two hotshot crews worked along the eastern flank of the fire

while the western edge of the fire moved toward monitoring status. The eastern and northwestern flanks of the fire are contained. The southern edge of the fire continues to be a challenge due to the rugged terrain.

The Dry Creek Fire, a 1,564-acre fire burning on the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest, was 60% contained as of June 9.

The two fires in the far Northeastern corner of Wallowa County were sparked by lightning in the early morning of June 4. Due to the rugged, remote, steep terrain and dry fuels creating severe fire behavior the fire was battled by helicopters and air tankers supported by smokejumpers, helicopter rappel firefighters and elite ground crews

called hotshots flown into the fire.

High winds hampered air attacks on June 5 and spread the fires far from their ignition points. By June 6 temperatures decreased and the humidity came up, aiding efforts to cool down hot spots and along the perimeter

See, **Fire**/Page 5A



Alex Wittwer/The Observer

Katelyn and Elysa Nason pause for a photo at Eastern Oregon University on Thursday, June 3, 2021. The mother and daughter duo graduate this year.

## Like mother, like daughter

### Daughter speeds through high school so she can graduate with her mom

By **DICK MASON**  
The Observer

LARGE A GRANDE — Katelyn Nason was ending her eighth grade year in the La Grande School District in April of 2018 when her mother Elysa received a message that changed the trajectory of her life.

Elysa Nason learned that she had been admitted into the Oregon Health & Science University School of Nursing, La Grande Campus. The mother of five told her family she planned to graduate with a degree in nursing in three years.

Two weeks later Katelyn made a decision which will forever touch her mom. The teenager decided to hit the academic fast track and grad-

uate from La Grande High School in three years so she could receive her diploma about the same time as her mother.

"She said 'Mom, I'm graduating with you,'" Elysa Nason said.

Katelyn made her decision as a gesture of gratitude.

"I wanted to honor my mom," Katelyn Nason said.

Katelyn, burning midnight oil by the gallon, began traveling in the fast lane of LHS's commencement highway. The student, after having her plan approved by school officials, began taking class loads which would cause some lesser students to buckle.

"There were a lot of long days and nights," said Katelyn, who took classes online via the La Grande

School District's Learning Academy and on her high school's campus.

Some encouraged her to ease up on her throttle and burn a little less rubber on her way to LHS's commencement stage.

"I said, 'I don't care, I'm going to do it,'" Katelyn said.

Buoyed by determination and family support she completed four years of class work in three and on Saturday, June 5, received her diploma at LHS's commencement.

"I am so proud of her," Elysa said.

Three days from now Elysa will fulfill her end of the heartfelt mother-daughter pact when she will receive her nursing degree from

See, **Grads**/Page 5A



Alex Wittwer/The Observer

Kachira Phillips tearfully receives her crown and becomes the 2021 Eastern Oregon Livestock Show Queen on Tuesday, June 8.

## Livestock show selects queen

Kachira Phillips will spend next year as 'ambassador' for EOLS

By **CARLOS FUENTES**  
The Observer

UNION — Kachira Phillips was crowned the 2021 Eastern Oregon Livestock Show Queen on Tuesday, June 8.

Phillips, 21, of North Powder, grew up going to the livestock show every year. After months of promoting her campaign on social media, posting fliers, mailing posters and advertising on radio stations, Phillips said she is ecstatic for the chance to be an ambassador for her community.

"Representing this area is representing my home," she said. "I've lived here all 21 years of my life, and there's no other place I'd rather be."

As queen, Phillips' responsibilities include attending other rodeos in the region and acting as an ambassador for the livestock show. She will interact with other rodeo queens and advocate for EOLS by taking part in parades and speaking at other community and promotional events.

This was Phillips' second campaign for queen in two years — both her and runner-up McKenzie Polfer competed last year until COVID-19 forced the rodeo to be cancelled.

Candidates are judged based on three categories — speeches, horsemanship and rodeo ticket sales. Being a fourth-generation horse fanatic, Phillips said she believes rodeos

are vital to keeping communities close-knit and educated.

"I am a thorough believer that agriculture is good in many many ways," Phillips said. "I like knowing where my food comes from, I think it's good to be in touch with the land and nature. Rodeos are really full of heritage and culture and that's why I love it so much."

Eastern Oregon Livestock Show President Dave Billings said that Phillips will be a major asset for the rodeo show in the coming year.

"She'll do great. She's a good person and I look forward to seeing her represent us this coming year," he said.

Phillips is no stranger to rodeo royalty. In 2015, she helped fundraise for the Haines Stampede Rodeo, where she would be a princess the following year. In 2017, she served as the Baker County Fair and Panhandle Rodeo Queen, followed by her 2018 role of princess. In 2019, Phillips was named Grande Ronde Rodeo Queen.

"I'm feeling proud. She puts her mind to something and you don't dare tell her no," Phillips' father, Bradley Phillips, said. "She's got several years of experience, she knows what she's doing, I have faith and confidence that she's going to do great."

See, **Queen**/Page 5A

## 'There's a disincentive to work'

Eastern Oregon lawmakers want to end supplemental unemployment

By **DAVIS CARBAUGH** and **BRYCE DOLE**  
EO Media Group

SALEM — Eastern Oregon lawmakers are calling for the state to end supplemental unemploy-



Beverage



Hansell



Nash

ment benefits to help out-of-work Oregonians endure the pandemic, saying the programs have spurred a workforce shortage that is hurting regional business economies.

Commissioners from 14 Eastern Oregon counties, as well as three state representatives and one senator, signed a letter and sent it Monday, June 7, to Gov. Kate Brown's office, asserting "unemployment recipients, especially those

See, **Work**/Page 5A

INDEX

Business & Ag.....1B	Dear Abby.....8B	Opinion.....4A
Classifieds.....4B	Horoscope.....4B	Sports.....8A
Comics.....7B	Lottery.....2A	Sudoku.....7B
Crossword.....4B	Obituaries.....3A	Weather.....8B

WEATHER Full forecast on the back of B section



Tonight  
46 LOW  
Cloudy and cool



Friday  
72/49  
Cloudy

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La Grande, Oregon

Email story ideas to [news@lagrandeobserver.com](mailto:news@lagrandeobserver.com).  
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