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Pride event returns

For the first time in at least 30 years, La Grande hosts LGBTQ celebration

By CARLOS FUENTES
The Observer

LA GRANDE — According to Terrance Cambell, a volunteer at the Pride Family Fun Day at Riverside Park on Friday, June 11, this was the first Pride event in La Grande in more than 30 years.

Cambell said that the event is only going to grow. On June 4, La Grande Mayor Stephen Clements declared June as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Queer month in the city, to be celebrated on June 4 starting in 2022.

“When I was younger, I knew I wanted to see something, but I never thought I was going to be the one to start anything,” said Brittany Cambell, event organizer and Terrance Cambell’s wife. “There’s so many resources that people are unaware of, so I decided to get those resources out, and then it blew up into this.”

Brittany Cambell is the local community outreach coordinator for Free Mom Hugs, a national nonprofit with the aim of “empowering the world to celebrate the LGBTQIA+ community through visibility, education, and conversation,” according to its website.

The event brought in dozens of people over the evening with free hot dogs, snacks and drinks, as well as games and arts and crafts tables.

Cambell has volunteered with Free Mom Hugs for nearly two years, which is about the same amount of time that she spent planning the Pride event. The couple planned to hold the Pride event in June of 2020, but COVID-19 restrictions forced them to postpone it.

Along with the games and children’s activities set up under the pavilion, there were a handful of booths

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Alex Wittwer/The Observer

Eastern Oregon University graduate Megan Demirjian poses from the back of a pickup truck moments before exiting to receive her diploma on Saturday, June 12, 2021. The university held drive-in commencements this weekend as opposed to in-person graduations such as those held by nearby high schools.

Drive-thru graduation

Eastern Oregon University honors more than 230 graduates

By CARLOS FUENTES
The Observer

LA GRANDE — Most years, Eastern Oregon University’s graduation takes place in Community Stadium, with extra stands brought in to accommodate the large number of families and friends in attendance.

This year, there were no extra seats brought in — in fact, there were no seats at all.

The 2021 commencement was a drive-thru ceremony, meaning that each graduate could only bring a car full of people to watch them walk across the stage to receive their diploma from University President Thomas Insko before returning to the car and exiting the school.

The ceremony, which took place on Saturday, June 12, on the west side of the EOU campus, was the result of months of deliberate planning, according to Vice President of University Advancement Tim Seydel.

“We came up with the



Alex Wittwer/The Observer

Elysa Nason pauses for a photo with her family from the back of a pickup truck during her graduation at Eastern Oregon University on Saturday, June 12, 2021.

idea of the hybrid drive-thru, which decreased all of the in-person contact but still gave students the chance to walk across the stage,” he said. “When we talked to students, they were really excited. We didn’t want to push it off again, so doing it in person was a big hope.”

Walking out of cars adorned with balloons, banners and other decorations, 236 gradu-

ates crossed the stage for more than 2-1/2 hours, including a few 2020 graduates who had a virtual commencement last year.

“It feels very surreal,” said Megan Brown, who graduated in 2020 with a degree in business administration. “Having an actual ceremony feels so much better than the three second blip last year. I worked really hard to

graduate a year early, so it feels good for my son to be here and watch me cross the stage.”

This year’s ceremony also included graduates from Oregon State University’s Agriculture and Natural Resource Program at EOU and Oregon Health & Science University School of Nursing La Grande Campus, which

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Civics bill is timely

La Grande educator said it will help students know how government works

By DICK MASON
The Observer

LA GRANDE — La Grande High School social studies teacher John Lamoreau believes it is critical that students learn how the legislative process works.

This is why he is among the educators who are strong supporters of Oregon’s new civics bill. The bill — Senate Bill 513 — will require all high school students to take half a credit of civics before they can graduate starting in 2025. The legislation was passed by the House and Senate and signed by Gov. Kate Brown on June 3.

Lamoreau believes the bill will help introduce more students to how government works at a time when many are apathetic about the subject.

“People are not as interested in how government works as they once were. Polls show that between one-fourth and one-third of adults do not know what the three branches of government are,” he said.

The educator attributes this in part to the internet and the misinformation it provides.

Lamoreau believes people need to learn how government works so they can defend our democracy.

“History tells us that societies do not last forever,” he said. “If we love our society, we need to protect it in order to keep it flourishing.”

Understanding elements

The LHS teacher believes it is critical to understand elements like the story of the First Amendment’s Bill of Rights which reads: “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting

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‘It’s a pretty critical one’

Forest Service officials scramble to find a fire lookout to work on Mount Ireland

By JAYSON JACOBY
Baker City Herald

BAKER CITY — Joel McCraw needed to find someone willing to spend the summer atop a mountain that has a three-state view but is far out of sight of any coffee shop or grocery store.

His task wasn’t as daunting as it might sound,

thanks in part to Facebook.

The job is fire lookout on Mount Ireland. The 8,346-foot peak is the apex of a granitic shoulder that extends several miles west from the spine of the Elkhorn Mountains and forms the divide between the Powder River and North Fork John Day River basins

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Wallowa-Whitman National Forest/Contributed Photo

The fire lookout on the summit of Mount Ireland, 8,346 feet, is staffed each summer. This year, though, the Forest Service is having a hard time finding someone to take the job. The lookout has a view that extends over parts of three national forests — Wallowa-Whitman, Umatilla and Malheur. The metal building replaced a wooden structure in 1957.

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Email story ideas to news@lagrandeobserver.com.
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THURSDAY

AC POWERSPORTS HAS NEW OWNER

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