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New facility opens a host of opportunities

Community Connection of Northeast Oregon moving into larger food distribution center in Island City

By **DICK MASON**
The Observer

ISLAND CITY — An expanded food distribution center is set to open soon in Island City, one which will help Community Connection of Northeast Oregon provide an added boost to families and individuals who have fallen on hard times.

The Northeast Oregon Regional Food Bank's new food distribution center is set to open by early August at 10213 N.

McAlister Lane, said Margaret Davidson, executive director of Community Connection of Northeast Oregon, which operates the food bank. The new distribution center will have 8,500 square feet, almost eight times the 1,100 square feet the regional food bank's distribution center has at its La Grande site at the Union County Senior Center.

"This is wonderful. The community is really pulling together to help us," Davidson said.

The total cost of the project is

\$1.04 million, which includes the purchase price of the building formerly owned by Pendleton Grain Growers. The funding has been provided by about eight grants, Community Connection and donations from individuals and businesses.

Community Connection has received \$150,000 in donations from individuals and businesses, \$65,000 more than Davidson's initial goal.

"People have been so generous," she said.

The larger distribution center will allow the regional food bank to maintain a stronger reserve for the pantries it provides food for in Union, Wallowa, Baker and Grant counties. It will also put the food bank in a position to better address emergencies such as those which could be caused by natural disasters and extended power outages, Davidson said.

The new distribution center will have more refrigeration

"It will give us more options. We will be able to provide a wider variety of healthier foods."

Margaret Davidson, executive director of Community Connection of Northeast Oregon, which operates the food bank

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Bill aims to increase access to college aid

SB 5528 would boost funding for programming, operations for higher ed

By **MEERAH POWELL**
Oregon Public Broadcasting

SALEM — Roughly 11,000 more students would have access to a state financial aid program in the next two years thanks to increased state funding in a higher education budget bill continuing to make its way through the Oregon Legislature.

The Legislature's Joint Ways and Means Subcommittee on Education voted Monday, June 14, to send Senate Bill 5528 to the full Joint Ways and Means Committee with a "do pass" recommendation.

If passed, the bill would increase funding for programming and operations at Oregon's public universities and community colleges over current levels. The bill also allocates more money to the Oregon Opportunity Grant, a state-funded grant program for low-income students.

"The budget doesn't give us a big bonus, it continues our current services," said Tim Seydel, vice president for university advancement at Eastern Oregon University. "For EOU, it means we were able to hold tuition flat for the upcoming year."

According to the Higher Education Coordinating Commission, from 2009 to 2019, more than 2 million applications for financial

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Alex Wittwer/The Observer

Jacob Gau poses for a photo inside the newly renovated McKenzie Amphitheater in Loso Hall at Eastern Oregon University on Tuesday, June 15, 2021. Gau had worked construction over the past year at the auditorium and theatre, and now plans to perform in the same hall he helped build.

Full-circle experience

Eastern Oregon University student sets the stage for renovations at Loso Hall

By **DAVIS CARBAUGH**
The Observer

LA GRANDE — Jacob Gau has helped lay the foundations for the music and theater programs at Eastern Oregon University, both literally and figuratively.

Gau, a senior at EOU, is a music student with a background in construction work who assisted in the renovations to Loso Hall over the past year. This coming school year, he will be performing on the very stage he helped build.

"Though I may be done here after next

year, students for years after me are going to enjoy this and use this area to be performative and creative," Gau said. "That's really awesome."

Gau plays trumpet, participates in the EOU chamber choir and is a member of the 45th Parallel ensemble. Raised by a lifelong electrician, Gau's background in construction led him to combine two of his skills as the Loso Hall renovations began in July 2020. The student joined on the job during winter break of the 2020 school year.

EOU Project Manager David Moore

worked with Kirby Nagelhout Construction and Waterleaf Architecture throughout the design process and construction. The hall itself opened in 1990 and has been operating on the same sound equipment since its original construction. Construction to the hall added to an already tumultuous year for the music and theater departments during the COVID-19 pandemic.

"There's always challenges associated with doing construction in a building

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LA GRANDE CITY COUNCIL

Council votes to send floodplain map to FEMA

By **DAVIS CARBAUGH**
The Observer

LA GRANDE — The La Grande City Council considered updates to the city's floodplain map at its special session on Monday, June 14, and voted to send the map to the Federal Emergency Management Agency for the next steps in the revision process.

Following a number of concerns from the public

and discourse between council members, Mayor Steve Clements and four council members voted yes, while Councilman Gary Lillard voted no.

Community Development Director Mike Boquist and Public Works Director Kyle Carpenter spoke during the special session regarding the floodplain map revisions and answered questions from the public.

The biggest item of

public concern was the new floodplain map's impact on the flood insurance rate maps, which lenders and insurance companies use to determine whether or not homeowners require flood insurance.

Boquist and Carpenter explained in detail the methods used by La Grande-based Anderson Perry & Associates to create the floodplain map over the preliminary pro-

cess of creating the data. The civil engineering firm used LiDAR technology to acquire elevation data over large areas through the use of lasers shot from aircraft.

Anderson Perry's map consists of roughly four proposed zones based on different types of potential flooding. The AH Zone is a new addition to the previous floodplain maps, with its purpose being to track potential low spots where

nonrunning water settles. The new zones address areas of potential ponding and are primarily located throughout the areas above Gekeler Lane and scattered in the neighborhoods around Eastern Oregon University. The city has not updated its floodplain maps since the mid-1970s.

Several La Grande citizens voiced concern with

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