

LOCAL: Downtown shop specializes in coffee drinks, tea, milkshakes, ice cream and pastries

Continued from Page 1A

According to fellow co-owner Gust Tsiatsos, the inside of the shop will not officially open until all the windows are installed and another emergency exit is put in. He expects this to take at least 30 days.

Gust and Karin Tsiatsos bought the old gas station at 1508 Adams Ave. in the fall of 2020 with the help of a \$64,000 grant from La Grande's Urban Renewal Agency.

As Eastern Oregon University alumni, the couple hope to make The Local a gathering place for college students.

"One of our goals was to provide a place specifically for the college students to be able to come down and have a place to



Carlos Fuentes/The Observer

Ally Tsiatsos, a barista at The Local and daughter of co-owners Gust and Karin Tsiatsos, practices taking orders during a training on Wednesday, June 23, 2021. The drive-thru portion of the new business in the former Texaco station on Adams Avenue, La Grande, opened June 25.

go and study and have a drink," Karin Tsiatsos said. "We're a college town, but there's not really any downtown college presence, there's not many great places to come downtown and study."

The owners have big plans for the shop, which has an ample outdoor seating area.

"We'll be having some live music throughout the summer. We've talked with some clubs on the (EOU) campus that want to host events in the fall, so hopefully it can become a small venue for these types of events," Karin Tsiatsos said.

The Tsiatsos family is no stranger to opening new businesses. Through their company GCT Land Management — a general contracting and rental

management business — they own several properties in the area, including The Landing, a micro-boutique hotel and restaurant just across the street from the new coffee shop.

According to Karin Tsiatsos, the couple wants to be involved in the community and help make downtown a more attractive place for people of all ages.

"We want to be community-minded. We just really are here for our town and want to be involved and be open," she said. "We want to provide a space for people to hang out, and we're excited about seeing development downtown. Let's give people a reason to come downtown."

DERBY

Continued from Page 1A

"At the time I didn't really do much sports and that was something that I kind of wanted to do and that's how I got into it," Reese Delaney said.

Over the years, the Delaneys elevated their knowledge of the sport as Reese Delaney continued to improve as a driver.

"I think the biggest thing is just racing, and racing better people," Sam Delaney said.

From Cove to Akron

After their first year of competition in 2016, Reese and Sam Delaney watched the world championships on YouTube. It was at that moment that making it to the championships became a personal goal for Reese Delaney, the sport becoming more than just a hobby.

"I saw those other kids do it and knew that's what I wanted," he said.

Reese Delaney achieved his goal and qualified for the 2019 All-American Soap Box Derby World Championships. Adjusting to the pressure and facing fierce competition from all across the country, he was unable to move past the first round in the competition. In 2020, he qualified again, but the event was canceled due to COVID-19.

"I'm excited," he said. "I get the chance to come back this year and hopefully do a little bit better than I did in 2019."

The first day at the All-American Soap Box Derby World Championships entails a thorough inspection of the derby cars, which proved stressful for the father and son team in 2019. Reese Delaney was



Alex Wittwer/The Observer

Reese Delaney secures a wheel to a soap box stock car during the Cove Best in the West rally race on Saturday, May 29, 2021. Delaney qualified to compete in July's All-American Soap Box Derby World Championship in Akron, Ohio.

also apprehensive having to race on an unfamiliar track, which made him have to make adjustments he had never performed before.

"We were definitely inexperienced there," Sam Delaney said. "We've learned some things on how to race on that track and I think Reese has become a better racer since then."

The Delaneys competed in 15 competitions this year in order to prepare for the world championships.

"Just knowing how it works and what to expect when we go up I think will really help us," Sam Delaney said.

Driving for a win

Heading into this year's world championships, the Delaneys are cherishing the opportunity to be back in the event and looking to make some noise in Akron. Reese Delaney's goal is to win a heat, something he came up short of in 2019.

"I'll still be happy if I don't, but that's just some-

thing I want to shoot for this year," he said.

Even with all the racing experience Reese Delaney has accumulated since 2016, he knows that riding down the track at the world championships is a special moment unlike any other.

"All that work that you put in to get there and then you go down that hill and you feel really happy, but you're also nervous that your day might be over if you lose," he said. "It's really fun."

Growing the sport

Outside of focusing on their own success, the Delaneys are active in helping promote soap box derby racing in Eastern Oregon. Sam Delaney is an event organizer with Oregon Soap Box Derby and helped put on the Best in the West rally race in Cove last month.

For Sam and Reese Delaney, balancing their own success and helping newcomers is a challenge they fully embrace.

know that most people like it when they do it, and like anything you can have a lot of success once you get into it."

He hopes that Oregon Soap Box Derby can hold a local car clinic in the near future, to show kids and their parents the ins and outs of working on a soap box derby car. As the sport continues to grow, a Cove native attending the world championships is testament to how far competitors in Eastern Oregon can go in the sport.

"It shows other kids that they can make it, but I don't like bragging about it," Reese Delaney said.

Taking on the field

The Delaneys leave for Akron July 13 and are hauling their car in a trailer across the country. They will be joined by Felix Sota, a Portland native who also qualified from Oregon.

The inspection and registration process takes place July 17, with super stock racing beginning on July 22. Reese Delaney will also compete in the world championship race July 24.

From racing down the hills in Cove to competing for a world championship, Reese Delaney has had the ultimate journey in soap box derby racing. Whether or not he achieves his goal of winning a heat and advancing at the All-American Soap Box Derby World Championships, Eastern Oregon will be in the spotlight at the most prominent competitive soap box derby event in the world.

In local events like the one in Cove, Sam Delaney spends the day running around helping organize the event, but he says he gets hyper-focused on his son's race for that 30-second duration. Reese Delaney also helps his dad at events and guides younger kids through the weigh-in and racing processes.

"It starts as a family, community thing," Sam Delaney said. "One of the things that we try to teach the kids is when they get to the amount of years that (Reese) has been doing it, is to kind of give back."

The Delaneys credit the event organizers who helped them learn the ropes when they were rookies in the sport for getting them to the point they are at today. For that reason, they aim to help newcomers as well as draw more interest toward the sport.

"People don't really know what it is and sometimes they don't understand it," Sam Delaney said. "We just try to let people

CHLORINE

Continued from Page 1A

a replacement electrical transformer and completed its testing earlier this week, which permitted the restart of the facility," a statement from Westlake said.

OXARC also supplies the chlorine for La Grande and Elgin, neither of which are experiencing a shortage, according to Elgin Public Works utility worker Tyler Crook and La Grande Environmental Resource supervisor Kyle Carpenter.

"So far, we haven't experienced any kind of shortage. We have a two-week supply of chlorine and we normally just get more whenever we need it," Carpenter said.

OXARC declined to comment on the shortage.

According to La Grande Parks and Recreation director Stu Spence, there is no chlorine shortage at Veterans' Memorial Pool for the time being.

The city of La Grande, which supplies water to more than 5,500 residential and commercial sites, is by far the biggest chlorine consumer in the area. As a precautionary measure, the city halted flushing of fire hydrants around La Grande to conserve some water, according to Carpenter.

"At this time, we're not particularly concerned, but if anything changes we will send out conservation notices," Carpenter said. "For now, we'll just wait and watch, and we're ready to handle any situation that might occur."

INLOW

Continued from Page 1A

the school, will allow the university to complete the second phase of its Inlow Hall restoration project. The first phase started in 2009 and was completed several years later. Phase 2 work on the structure will involve steps like completing seismic upgrades started in Phase 1 to make the building better prepared for an earthquake, replacing the building's clay tile roof system and removing unreinforced brick chimneys.

Other upgrades will involve replacing electrical, heating, ventilation and air conditioning systems with smaller more efficient versions, which will boost the availability of space for other uses at Inlow Hall. The space would be used to provide a more expansive site for Eastern's Rural Engagement and Vitality Center, according to the capital funding request the school submitted to the state. The center was created to develop partnerships between EOU and entities in the region that enhance the vitality of the region and develop its rural workforce and leaders.

EOU's capital funding request report said that the only alternative to the renovation project would be the demolition and replacement



The Observer, File

Inlow Hall, which was built in 1928-1929, is set to receive major restoration and modernization work after a committee in the Oregon Legislature voted on Thursday, June 24, 2021, to allow the use of nearly \$446 million in state bonds to finance major building and renovation projects.

of Inlow Hall. The report said this would not be a reasonable alternative.

"This building serves every single EOU student and its ability to do so is critical," the EOU report stated.

Construction of Inlow Hall began in 1928 and was completed in 1929. Inlow

Hall was Eastern's first building and the only one in place when the school opened in June 1929. It remained Eastern's only building until the mid-1930s when Ackerman Hall was constructed. Inlow Hall, in the years that followed, has evolved into Eastern's primary adminis-

trative and student support services building.

All the funding EOU will receive for the project will have to be spent for the renovation of Inlow Hall. Seydel said none of it may be used to pay for the restoration of the building's grand north staircase, which has been closed for years due to its deteriorating condition. The staircase is as old as Inlow Hall.

Work on Phase 2 of the Inlow Hall restoration project will likely start in July 2023 and be completed by September 2025.

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