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Signers want initiative on ballot

Petition wants to change law banning marijuana farming and distribution in La Grande

By DAVIS CARBAUGH
The Observer

LA GRANDE — A medicinal marijuana farmer is leading the charge to bring back a medical marijuana dispensary to La Grande.

Derik Drake, owner of Flower of Life Farms, Nyssa, is aiming to partially repeal Ordinance 3228 banning marijuana farming and distribution in La Grande in order to take over as owner of HWY 30 Cannabis. Drake hopes to gain 1,315 signatures by Monday, July 26, in order to put the initiative on the city ballot in November.

Drake and his team have frequented local shopping centers, events and the downtown area in order to advertise and garner support.

“We’re working at it from every angle,” he said. “We’re just trying to keep things moving in a positive direction in this community.”

In 2015, the city of La Grande adopted Ordinance 3228 banning medical marijuana processing sites, medical marijuana dispensaries, recreational marijuana producers, recreational marijuana processors, recreational marijuana wholesalers and recreational marijuana retailers. Despite the ban, HWY 30 Cannabis on Adams Avenue was grandfathered in as a result of being opened prior to the ordinance, which allowed the shop to continue operating as the only medical marijuana dispensary in the city.

As a local medical marijuana farmer, Drake sold his product to HWY 30 Cannabis for years and looked to take over the business as owner Rona Lindsey started planning her retirement. However,

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Too close for comfort

Fighting Elbow Creek Fire is personal for Jeff Weer, who calls Lostine home

By BILL BRADSHAW
Wallowa County Chieftain

PROMISE — Fighting a wildfire is no easy task, but it becomes more meaningful when it’s in your own backyard. That’s what Jeff Weer said from the front line of the Elbow Creek Fire near Promise on Thursday, July 22.

“It’s hard work, it’s smokey, it’s fun. I wouldn’t do this job if I didn’t enjoy doing it,” he said at the Bar-B Ranch staging area south of Promise. “I just enjoy being out in the field. I enjoy the camaraderie of the crews and the folks involved.”

His wife, Maria, is fully supportive of her husband’s passion for fighting wildfire.

“I think that I am proud to see him be able to help our community in this way,” she said. “I know fighting fires is his passion and he’s in his element. He’s happy he can make a difference.”

The couple have a ranch near Lostine, making it somewhat convenient for Weer to make it to work each day.

“I live here locally. I can go home and sleep in my own bed — it’s a 15-minute drive from my house to the fire camp,” he said. “So I’m fortunate to be able to have done that. There’s several nights I did stay up here.”

But even when he’s sent to fires elsewhere, it’s still part of his passion.

“I’m happy to be here. A lot of times we get sent to other places, other parts of the state or the country to fight fire,” Weer said. “I wasn’t born and raised in Wallowa County but I’ve lived here (and worked) for the U.S. Forest Service working on my 17th year. It’s all been here in this district.”

There since the outbreak

Weer is an engine captain with the U.S. Forest Service. On the Elbow Creek Fire he’s the supervisor trainee on Division Tango. He’s been on the fire since it was first reported a week ago.



Bill Bradshaw/Wallowa County Chieftain
Jeff Weer, supervisor trainee for the Division Tango of the Elbow Creek Fire, talks about battling the blaze Thursday, July 22, 2021, from the Bar-B Ranch staging area near Promise. He’s been on the fire since its initial outbreak a week earlier.



Ben Lonergan/East Oregonian
A fire line, cut with a bulldozer, crosses the forest floor near Promise on Thursday, July 22, 2021, as fire crews work to stop the spread of the Elbow Creek Fire.

“My sole focus is on Division Tango,” he said, but added that his concern also is tying in with neighboring divisions — Mike and Whiskey. “We’ve had our rough patches, but we’re holding our own.”

He has a good grasp on the

progress.

“We’ve got people down there, we’ve got an indirect dozer line in, meaning it’s not tied in against the fire line, against the black,” he said.

“There’s unburned material between the dozer line and the

black and we’re trying to keep it from jumping over the dozer line. We’re trying to get that line tighter and get crews in there to put that line tight against the black.”

His approximately 120 firefighters are hard at it.

“They use normal wildland firefighting tools — pulaskis, shovels — and putting in hose lays,” he said. “We have big tanks of water at the top of a drainage and run hoses down to the bottom of the drainage ... and we branch other hoses off of it and take it out in the woods and try to get a mop-up ... 25 feet around the entire perimeter of our division. We’re working on that slowly but surely.”

Brett Deedon, a trainee public information officer with the state Fire Marshal’s Office, said there are about 1,000 firefighters on the entire fire.

“And that’s continuing to

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Patty Sandoz/Contributed Photo

Anita Pipes — shown at her electric keyboard with her friend Pam Moore, of La Grande — began taking piano lessons at the age of 88.

‘Music was her passion’

Family, local musicians remember Anita Pipes, an original member of Grande Ronde Symphony Orchestra

By DICK MASON
The Observer

LA GRANDE — Anita Pipes, a woman with deep La Grande roots who recently died at age 104, was on a path to local music history in the 1920s when she traveled on a horse between Island City and La Grande to take violin lessons.

The skills Pipes developed with the help of those violin lessons eventually led her to become an original member of Grande Ronde Symphony Orchestra in 1951.

She was proud to be a

founding member of the symphony and enjoyed playing for it, said Jean Conklin of Pasco, Washington, one of Pipes’ two daughters.

“It gave her a natural outlet for expressing her talent,” Conklin added that her mother stopped riding horses in the 1940s but never stopped learning or playing musical instruments while following an inspiring life path.

Pipes, who died at a care facility in Kennewick, Washington, on June 25, was a quintessential lifelong learner. She taught herself to play the autoharp at age

67 and started taking piano lessons when she was 88, all while retaining a love for playing the violin.

“Music was her passion,” said Conklin of her mother, who attended Island City Elementary School and was a La Grande High School graduate.

Staying connected to the symphony

Pipes’ musical talent allowed her to become the Grande Ronde Symphony Orchestra’s concert mistress, a prestigious

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TUESDAY

SANDWICHES: A MEAL IN ONE HAND

Online at lagrandeobserver.com