

TODAY

On Oct. 2, 1869, political and spiritual leader Mohandas K. Gandhi was born in Porbandar, India.

In 1890, comedian Groucho Marx was born Julius Marx in New York.

In 1919, President Woodrow Wilson suffered a serious stroke at the White House that left him paralyzed on his left side.

In 1941, during World War II, German armies launched an all-out drive against Moscow; Soviet forces succeeded in holding onto their capital.

In 1944, German troops crushed the two-month-old Warsaw Uprising, during which a quarter of a million people had been killed.

In 1967, Thurgood Marshall was sworn as an associate justice of the U.S. Supreme Court as the court opened its new term.

In 1970, one of two chartered twin-engine planes flying the Wichita State University football team to Utah crashed into a mountain near Silver Plume, Colorado, killing 31 of the 40 people on board.

In 1984, Richard W. Miller became the first FBI agent to be arrested and charged with espionage. (Miller was tried three times; he was sentenced to 20 years in prison, but was released after nine years.)

In 1986, the Senate joined the House in voting to override President Reagan's veto of stiff economic sanctions against South Africa.

In 2002, the Washington, D.C.-area sniper attacks began, setting off a frantic manhunt lasting three weeks. (John Allen Muhammad and Lee Boyd Malvo were finally arrested for killing 10 people and wounding three others; Muhammad was executed in 2009; Malvo was sentenced to life in prison.)

In 2005, a tour boat, the Ethan Allen, capsized on New York's Lake George, killing 20 elderly passengers. Playwright August Wilson died in Seattle at age 60. Actor-comedian Nipsey Russell died in New York at age 87.

In 2017, rock superstar Tom Petty died at a Los Angeles hospital at the age of 66, a day after suffering cardiac arrest at his home in Malibu, California.

In 2019, House Democrats threatened to make White House defiance of a congressional request for testimony and documents potential grounds for an article of impeachment against President Donald Trump. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo acknowledged for the first time that he had been on the phone call in which Trump pressed Ukraine's president to investigate Democrat Joe Biden.

Today's Birthdays: Retired MLB All-Star Maury Wills is 89. Movie critic Rex Reed is 83. Singer-songwriter Don McLean is 76. Cajun/country singer Jo-el Sonnier is 75. Actor Avery Brooks is 73. Fashion designer Donna Karan is 73. Photographer Annie Leibovitz is 72. Rock musician Mike Rutherford (Genesis, Mike & the Mechanics) is 71. Singer-actor Sting is 70. Actor Robin Riker is 69. Actor Lorraine Bracco is 67. Country musician Greg Jennings (Restless Heart) is 67. Rock singer Phil Oakey (The Human League) is 66. R&B singer Freddie Jackson is 65. Singer-producer Robbie Nevil is 63. Retro-soul singer James Hunter is 59. Rock musician Bud Gaugh (Sublime, Eyes Adrift) is 54. Folk-country singer Gillian Welch is 54. Country singer Kelly Willis is 53. Actor Joey Slotnick is 53. R&B singer Dion Allen (Az Yet) is 51. Actor-talk show host Kelly Ripa (TV: "Live with Kelly and Ryan") is 51. Rock musician Jim Root (AKA #4 Slipknot) is 50. Singer Tiffany is 50. Rock singer Lene Nystrom is 48. Actor Efrén Ramirez is 48. R&B singer LaTocha Scott (Xscape) is 49. Gospel singer Mandisa (TV: "American Idol") is 45. Actor Brianna Brown is 42. Rock musician Mike Rodden (Hinder) is 39.

LOTTERY

Wednesday, Sept. 29, 2021
Megabucks
6-8-12-13-30-36
Jackpot: \$3.8 million
Lucky Lines
3-6-12*16-17-24-26-29
Estimated jackpot: \$13,000
Powerball
2-7-11-17-32
Powerball: 11
Power Play: 3
Jackpot: \$620 million
Win for Life
19-23-41-51
Pick 4
1 p.m.: 1-4-9-6
4 p.m.: 9-5-5-6
7 p.m.: 6-3-9-3
10 p.m.: 0-8-6-9
Thursday, Sept. 30, 2021
Lucky Lines
3-8-9-13-17-23-28-30
Jackpot: \$14,000
Pick 4
1 p.m.: 5-4-9-9
4 p.m.: 5-6-8-5
7 p.m.: 0-0-4-0
10 p.m.: 7-4-9-5

Bi-Mart spins off pharmacy operations

The Observer

LA GRANDE — Bi-Mart announced Thursday, Sept. 30, that Walgreens will acquire Bi-Mart's pharmacy business, including "pharmacy patient prescription files and related pharmacy inventory of 56 Bi-Mart pharmacies located across Oregon, Idaho and Washington."

"This decision, while difficult, is strategically important as we move to strengthen our solid financial position and expand our plans for future growth in the Northwest," Rich Truett, Bi-Mart president and CEO, said.

Current Bi-Mart pharmacy staff members will be offered an opportunity to join Walgreens.

"We look forward to welcoming Bi-Mart patients to Walgreens pharmacy services, as well as providing employment opportunities to Bi-Mart pharmacy associates in available positions throughout our stores where they can continue to meet the needs of their patients," Walgreens regional vice president Rob Ewing said.

Don Leber, vice president of marketing and advertising for Bi-Mart, said the transition has been under discussion for quite some time.

"It's been worked on for



Davis Carbaugh/The Observer

Bi-Mart announced Thursday, Sept. 30, that Walgreens will acquire Bi-Mart's pharmacy business, including "pharmacy patient prescription files and related pharmacy inventory of 56 Bi-Mart pharmacies located across Oregon, Idaho and Washington."

several months," he said. "We started this process two to four years ago with other locations when we transferred (the pharmacies of) 20 stores to see if we could make them more profitable."

Most prescription information will be transferred to nearby stores, according to a press release from the two companies. In areas that do not have a Walgreens nearby, however, Walgreens will operate already-existing pharmacies in Bi-Mart locations under the Walgreens brand.

It's not yet known if

that will be the case in the Northeastern Oregon Bi-Mart locations in Hermiston, Pendleton, La Grande or Baker City. The Walgreens locations nearest to Northeastern Oregon are in Tri-Cities, Washington, and Ontario.

A list of which Bi-Mart locations would house a Walgreens pharmacy was not available, said Phil Caruso with Walgreens media relations, noting that the deal is subject to customary closing conditions.

Caruso did say that once the transfer is complete, new patients will have access to "all the

benefits of Walgreens," including health screenings, immunizations, omni-channel support that includes access to pharmacists, and "adherence-boosting programs" through a mobile device such as daily pill reminders and refill by scan.

Patients who are having their prescriptions transferred will be notified by mail, and "both companies will work together to help ensure a smooth transition for pharmacy patients," the release stated.

The file transfer should be complete by January

COVID-19 cases still affecting area schools

By DICK MASON

The Observer

UNION COUNTY — The La Grande and Imbler school districts continue to be the hardest hit in Union County by COVID-19. Still, the pandemic's impact is declining in the county's school districts.

The La Grande School District, as of Friday, Sept. 24, had 68 students out of school because they had tested positive for COVID-19 or were being quarantined because of close contact with people suspected of being infected. The total is down significantly from mid-September when the district had 123 students out due to COVID-19.

La Grande School District Superintendent George Mendoza credits a large share of the decline to a continued focus on mitigation strategies that include social distancing and the wearing of masks.

"They are becoming more second nature," Mendoza said.

The superintendent also said an increase in the number of people in Union County who have been vaccinated for COVID-19 could be a factor.

He said he is encouraged by his school district's



Alex Wittwer/The Observer

La Grande High School student Fabian Lealponce assists a freshman during orientation at LHS on Monday, Aug. 30, 2021.

downward COVID-19 trend.

"I hope that we keep moving in this direction," Mendoza said.

The most recent available statistics indicate that during the week of Sept. 20-24, 21 La Grande students were out after testing positive for COVID-19. La Grande High School had eight students out due to positive tests and La Grande Middle School had six. At the elementary school level, Central had four students out due to positive tests, Greenwood had two, and Island City had one.

During that week, 47 students in the La Grande School District were being quarantined due to close

contacts. The student total included 13 at LHS, 10 at LMS, 12 at Central Elementary, six at Greenwood Elementary and six at Island City Elementary.

A total of six La Grande School District staff members also were out due to positive COVID-19 tests or close contacts.

The Imbler School District did not have any staff members out due to COVID-19 as of Friday, Oct. 1, but it did have five or six students out because they were being quarantined due to close contacts. These numbers are down from Sept. 19, when the school district had four staff members and 20 students out due to COVID-19.

Imbler School School District Superintendent Doug Hislop is delighted with the improvement.

"This is huge," he said.

The North Powder School District had four students absent as of Sept. 30 due to COVID-19, all because of close contacts. School District Superintendent Lance Dixon said all of the contacts were outside the school district's campus. He believes students have less risk of COVID-19 exposure while in school where they are in a more controlled environment.

North Powder has one staff member out due to COVID-19, an individual who tested positive for the illness.

The Cove School District as of Sept. 30 did not have any students or staff out because of COVID-19, said Superintendent Earl Pettit. This is down from Sept. 19 when the school district had one student and one staff member out due to the virus.

Currently the Union School District has two students being quarantined because of COVID-19 exposure and the Elgin School District has three. No staff members in the Union or Elgin districts are out due to COVID-19.

NEWS BRIEFS

OHA report shows one new COVID-19 death in Union County

SALEM — The Oregon Health Authority detailed 15 new COVID-19 cases and one new death in Union County in its report Friday, Oct. 1, 2021. An 86-year-old man from Union County tested positive for COVID-19 on Sept. 28 and died at Grande Ronde Hospital on Sept. 29. He had underlying conditions.

The report, combined with 1,896 cases yesterday, brings Oregon's total to 331,709 since the start of the pandemic. The statewide death toll stands at 3,815.

The report brings Union County's total case count to 2,956 since the start of the pandemic, while there have been 40 deaths. In Walla Walla County, there were four new COVID-19 cases on the latest report, bringing the county's total to 582.

The number of patients hospitalized with COVID-19 across the state is 792, which is a decrease of 24 patients since yesterday's report. There are presently 223 COVID-19 patients in ICU units. Throughout the state, there are 49 available adult ICU beds out of 696 total and 320 adult

non-ICU beds out of 4,234.

Elgin man sentenced to more than 14 years for sex abuse, assault

LA GRANDE — An Elgin man has been sentenced 14 years and seven months in prison after being found guilty of multiple charges of sex abuse and assault.

Joseph Ainsworth, 40, of Elgin, was sentenced Monday, Sept. 27, by Union County Circuit Court Judge Thomas Powers after two separate bench trials that took place in July and August, according to a press release from the Union County District Attorney's office.

The case started in July 2020 when the mother of two girls reported to law enforcement that her daughters told her they had been sexually abused by Ainsworth, their stepfather, over the course of several years.

A joint investigation by the Union County Sheriff's Office and Department of Human Services was started July 24, 2020, the day after Ainsworth struck his two sons, one in the face and the other in the leg. The boys were taken to Grande Ronde Hospital where medical staff

observed bruises on them, according to the press release.

La Grande set to allow open fires at Morgan Lake

LA GRANDE — The city of La Grande declared the opening of fire usage at Morgan Lake in an announcement that went into effect on Oct. 1.

The decision comes after increased precipitation and fall temperatures. The city will allow open fires within the park's metal fire rings, per the recommendation of the Oregon Department of Forestry.

Morgan Lake experienced severe fire risk over the summer, and open fires and fireworks were banned in the park in June. The restrictions were aimed at reducing human-created wildfires. The park closed from July 19 through Aug. 24 due to dry conditions and extreme fire danger, according to the La Grande Fire Department. When the park reopened, visitors were allowed to use propane stoves but open fires were still banned.

The park is on schedule to remain open until Oct. 31.

— The Observer

Grande Ronde River opens for coho salmon harvest

The Observer

ENTERPRISE — For the second consecutive year, anglers will be able to harvest coho salmon in the Grande Ronde River.

Starting Friday, Oct. 1, the bag limit for adult coho salmon over 20 inches is two. For jack coho salmon 20 inches or less, the bag limit will be five with two daily limits in possession. The regulations are in place through Nov. 30 or until further notice from the Oregon-Washington border upstream to the Wildcat Bridge, approximately 7 miles upstream of the town of Troy.

Fish managers don't expect to see fish being caught for a few more weeks. Fish have recently begun to cross the Lower Granite Dam on the Snake River, the last dam of eight, and will need just a bit of time to make their way up the Grande Ronde. Managers also expect that most coho catch will be incidental while anglers are targeting hatchery steelhead, and they don't expect additional anglers on the river.

"While we didn't see a lot of directed effort or catch of coho last year, it's nice to give anglers the option for harvest when they do land one," said Kyle Bratcher, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife district fish biologist. "With generally low catch rates of coho, we don't see a lot of anglers targeting them specifically."

Creel clerks will be monitoring the fishery regularly to assess potential effects to wild fish and assess success of anglers. Information gained from creel surveys helps ODFW minimize impacts to wild fish populations and informs programs that can improve the fishery over time. Anglers are encouraged to engage with the creel clerks when they can, as they have their finger on the pulse of the fishery and can often provide anglers with beneficial information.

In addition to a strong coho return, Bratcher says anglers also occasionally hook fall chinook salmon and bull trout during the Grande Ronde steelhead fishery.

"One of the great things about the Grande Ronde from a fish biologist's view is the diversity of fish species," he said.

Bratcher added that "anglers should remember that fall chinook, bull trout, and wild steelhead cannot be harvested in the Grande Ronde and must be released unharmed."

Since Lostine River coho were reintroduced by the Nez Perce Tribe and the state in 2017, Columbia River coho returns have improved including the Lostine River stock, allowing ODFW to open the first recreational fishery in 2020 and continue with that opportunity in 2021. Officials with ODFW and the tribe expect more than 4,000 Lostine River coho to pass Lower Granite Dam, before returning to the Grande Ronde River Basin.

Coho salmon were reintroduced to provide for harvest in both treaty and non-treaty fisheries and to restore ecological function lost in their absence. Coho were extirpated in the early 1900s with multiple reintroduction efforts attempted up until the 1970s. Current pilot reintroduction efforts are aimed at assessing the success of reintroduction, using a lower Columbia River stock, prior to potential development of a localized hatchery stock.