

# THE OBSERVER

SERVING UNION AND WALLOWA COUNTIES SINCE 1896

October 16, 2021

WEEKEND EDITION

\$1.50

## Local farmer leaves a legacy

Dale Johnson embraced family bonds, work ethic prior to tragic farming accident

By **DAVIS CARBAUGH**  
The Observer

LA GRANDE — A tragic end did not define a local farmer's impact on those around him. Dale Johnson of La Grande died on Friday, Oct. 1, due to an ill-fated farming accident in Imbler. The 58-year-old is remembered by those who knew him as a family man with a strong work ethic and a positive outlook toward those he encountered in life.

"A lot of people cared for my dad, as did I," said Daniel Johnson, one of Dale Johnson's three children who spoke on behalf of the Johnson family.



Daniel Johnson, a deputy with the Union County Sheriff's Office, noted that his father's impact far outmeasured his 5-foot-8-inch, 135-pound stature. While Daniel Johnson and his brother, Eric, are much larger in physical composition than their father, the weight of his influence on their lives was tremendous.

"I've always been proud to call him my father," Daniel Johnson said. "He was proud of his children and proud of his grandchildren. He was just a wonderful man."

Dale Johnson was a farmer for nearly the entirety of his life, growing up in the business and carrying that passion into his final days. Born in Colorado, he moved to the area in his childhood and attended Island City Elementary School, La Grande Middle School and La Grande High School. He worked for Bingaman Farms in Imbler for roughly the past 16 years.

"It was a tragic accident that you wouldn't wish on anybody," his son Daniel said. "He has always been a hard worker and a devoted farmer."

Daniel Johnson noted that farming is not always the most lucrative business, but that the Johnson family felt rich

See **Johnson**, Page A5



Alex Wittwer/The Observer

**Brett Baxter, principal of La Grande High School, helps stack wood on Wednesday, Oct. 13, 2021, at the woodlot belonging to Neighbors Together of Union County in La Grande, a nonprofit volunteer organization that provides free firewood in the winter. Seniors with the La Grande High School spent the day volunteering to help with projects, including Grande Ronde Hospital, Pioneer Park and Mount Emily Recreation Area.**

## Giving back

La Grande High School seniors complete service projects across the community

By **DAVIS CARBAUGH**  
The Observer

LA GRANDE — It was a snowy, wet morning, but that did not stop the La Grande High School Class of 2022 from giving back to the community.

The high school students participated in a senior day of service on Wednesday, Oct. 13, a tradition that dates back roughly eight years. The class split into groups to conduct various service projects across the area throughout the day.

"The experience of service to others is a critical thing to be a part of," La Grande High School Principal Brett Baxter said. "I'm proud of them and think they did a great job."

The seniors met at the high school in the morning and took buses to various areas in the community. Projects included trail cleanup and renovations at Mount Emily Recreational Area, cleanup along the Island City strip, assistance to the field renovations at Pioneer Park and chopping wood to be donated to families. Groups also performed landscape work at



Alex Wittwer/The Observer

**Tyrus Riness, a senior at La Grande High School, prepares to split a large wood round on Wednesday, Oct. 13, 2021, at Neighbors Together of Union County's woodlot. The senior class volunteered across town to help nonprofits such as this one that provides free firewood in the winter to those who need it.**

Island City Elementary School, La Grande Middle School and Grande Ronde Hospital.

"It's making a big difference to the organizations where we're serving," La Grande lan-

guage arts teacher Shauna Hendrickson told the group of students.

One particular crew of roughly 10 students chopped wood at Neighbors Together

of Union County, a nonprofit organization that supplies firewood to lower-income families during the winter months.

See, **Service**/Page A5

## Educators applaud rule change for substitutes

Relaxed standards meant to ease teacher shortage

By **DICK MASON**  
The Observer

UNION COUNTY — Local educators are expressing qualified support for the Oregon Teacher Standards and Practices Commission's recent decision to temporarily relax the state's standards for

substitute teachers.

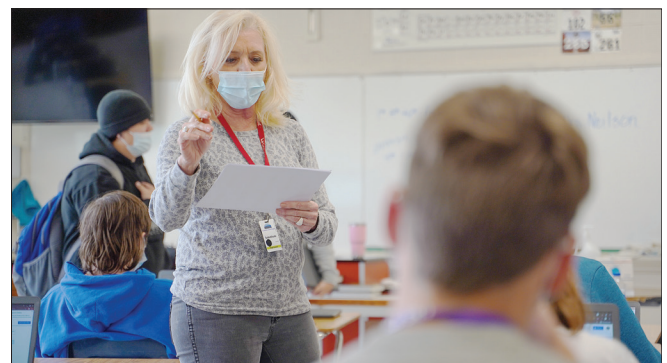
The TSPC's decision means educators no longer need a bachelor's degree to work as substitute teachers in Oregon. The emergency rule the TSPC put in place was made to help school districts deal with a statewide shortage of substitute teachers and expires March 31, 2022. It pertains only to people sponsored by a school district and allows them to work only in that district.

North Powder School

District Superintendent Lance Dixon supports TSPC's move because it will make it more likely that students throughout the state will be able to continue receiving in-person instruction instead of being taught online via school districts' Comprehensive Distance Learning programs.

"Whatever it takes to keep kids in school is better than CDL," he said.

See, **Rule**/Page A5



Alex Wittwer/The Observer

**Christie Neilson, a substitute teacher at La Grande High School, takes roll during a class Thursday, Oct. 14, 2021. Neilson has been working as a substitute teacher for nine years.**

### INDEX

Classified.....B2 outdoors & Rec....B1 Opinion.....A4  
Comics.....B5 Horoscope.....B4 Records.....A3  
Crossword.....B2 Lottery.....A2 Sports.....A9  
Dear Abby.....B6 Obituaries.....A3 State.....A7

### WEATHER Full forecast on the back of B section

Tonight 47 Low Clear  
Sunday 67/38 Becoming cloudy

### CONTACT US

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Issue 122  
2 sections, 16 pages  
La Grande, Oregon

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