



Alex Wittwer/The Observer

Eli Clark, 14, on Friday, Nov. 26, 2021, carries a Christmas tree that will be sold to support a student trip to Philadelphia. The tree lot, in downtown La Grande, is a fundraiser for an educational trip to be taken by Elgin and Imbler students.

TREES

Continued from Page A5

The Christmas trees, which were transported from a tree farm in Molalla, are for sale starting at \$70 for trees under 7-feet, and \$75 for the taller timbers. The prices for trees are slightly higher than previous years due to a number of factors exacerbating the supply of the holiday staple.

"This year there was a big shortage because of the drought," said Aimee Patterson, a volunteer helping unload and place trees in The Local's courtyard along with her husband, Ken Patterson.

The Union County Youth Heritage program was spearheaded by Georgia McKee, who has lent a hand in leading the annual fundraiser for nearly 30 years.

The sale isn't the only way the students have raised money over the years.

"We've done things like



Alex Wittwer/The Observer

Kolt Alam, 12, removes twine from a Christmas tree for sale at The Local in downtown La Grande on Friday, Nov. 26, 2021. The fundraiser supports a trip to Philadelphia for Elgin and Imbler students.

cookie grams," Aimee Patterson said. "We've done a lot of cans and bottles (collections)."

In 2019, the Christmas tree fundraiser was held at the former veterinarian

clinic on Island Avenue. This year, the new location in downtown La Grande should be a boon to sales, Ken Patterson said. The tree lot will be for sale from 2-8 p.m. on Fridays, 9 a.m.

to 6 p.m. on Saturdays, and noon to 6 p.m. on Sundays until all the trees are sold.

"This has been a real good fundraiser for the kids over the years," Ken Patterson said.

DUTY

Continued from Page A1

"has not garnered any certified officers," Bell said.

Lateral transfers are valuable for police departments due to the amount of training required for new officers. It can take up to nine months to transition a new recruit into an independent and capable police officer, Bell said.

"Five to eight years ago we started retiring police officers — and you can't quickly replace the experience and the wisdom that those career police officers possess," Bell said. "You genuinely can't just replace a police officer. It's a lengthy road."

Dealing with a public image problem

While current labor shortages are not limited to one career, police agencies are facing yet another hurdle in their attempts to bring in new hires — a growing sentiment that paints police officers in a bad light.

"Everybody is having a hard time finding people who want to work, and especially this profession right now. It's probably not the most sexy profession," said Pendleton Police Chief Charles Byram.

Byram, along with Bell and Duby, noted the public image of law enforcement has deteriorated in the wake of massive protests and riots across the nation following the murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis on May 25, 2020. Images from major cities showed police clad in riot gear blanketing city blocks in tear gas, as well as several incidents of assault against members of the media.

"Since George Floyd we have seen a marked decrease in the number of people interested in applying to be police officers," Bell said. "Law enforcement has really

been beat up in the course of the last 18 to 24 months."

That sentiment has been muted in more rural areas, where police enjoy a strong support from local residents who, by and large, have a favorable outlook toward law enforcement, according to Bell. Much of that favorable opinion may stem from the active community involvement from police officers in rural communities.

"We have to become embedded in our community. I mean people know us; we're only 17,000," Byram said, referring to Pendleton's population. "Somebody is going to know you. You're only a few degrees of separation away from someone you're arresting."

Holding the line on values

Byram said those who are interested in a law enforcement career are welcome to join an officer for a ride-along or to come in and chat with the police chief about the job.

"Quite honestly, you know, I'm open for all comers," Byram said. "Whether you have experience or not, it's one of those things where we're also good at training cops."

However, not everyone who applies should be hired as a police officer. They need to meet the basic physical and psychological standards set by the agencies and the state, as well as passing background checks and medical screenings.

"The one thing that I won't do is sacrifice our standards just to make a hiring decision, I won't do it," Byram said. "If you do that, then you're setting yourself up for disaster. If we have to run short for a little bit, that's fine. But our values, our mission, our beliefs aren't going to be sacrificed just because I need another body on the road."

VISIT US ON THE WEB AT:

www.LaGrandeObserver.com

OVERDOSES

Continued from Page A1

that contribute to overdoses. We also believe people are seeking out very potent and powerful drugs like fentanyl that are so strong they are more likely to result in overdose."

The authorities urges the public to be aware of the increased risk of overdose. The Center for Human Development offers free Narcan kits, an emergency treatment that can reverse an overdose. The organization also encourages indi-

viduals to call the drug abuse Hope line, at 541-562-HOPE, which "is there and ready to help when people need assistance and are ready for that help."

Brogioiti noted those who are addicted may not be prepared to ask for help. For that reason, the availability of Narcan is essential.

"Making Narcan kits widely available to substance users and those around them save lives," she said. "Anyone can have and use this lifesaving medication, and it is available free at CHD."

While there may be no clear answers for the recent increase in local overdoses, authorities are monitoring the situation and are ready to provide assistance.

"One of the most important tools we have at this point is making sure that people using substances and their family and friends

know about the increase in overdoses that we are seeing in our community and making sure they have and know how to use Naloxone/Narcan," Brogioiti said. "We also want to make sure people have information about where they can get treatment and services when they are ready."

La GRANDE AUTO REPAIR advertisement featuring Joe Horst, phone number 975-2000, and website www.lagrandeautorepair.com.

Grande Ronde Hospital and Clinics advertisement with text: "We are Growing! Entry level jobs with medical and dental insurance, paid leave, retirement and opportunity to grow! Go to grh.org/careers Find out why over 700 of your neighbors said YES to Grande Ronde Hospital and Clinics!"

AT&T Internet advertisement: "FEEL THE SPEED, EVEN AT PEAK TIMES. Get strong, fast Wi-Fi to work and play throughout your home. No annual contract. Power multiple devices at once—everyone can enjoy their own screen. Over 99% reliability." Includes phone number 888-486-0359.

Inogen advertisement: "One solution for oxygen at home, away, and for travel. Introducing the INOGEN ONE - It's oxygen therapy on your terms. No more tanks to refill. No more deliveries. No more hassles with travel. The INOGEN ONE portable oxygen concentrator is designed to provide unparalleled freedom for oxygen therapy users." Includes phone number 1-855-839-0752.

Generac advertisement: "Prepare for unexpected power outages with a Generac home standby generator. SCHEDULE YOUR FREE IN-HOME ASSESSMENT TODAY! 877-557-1912. FREE 7-Year Extended Warranty* A \$695 Value! Offer valid March 16, 2020 - June 30, 2020." Includes image of a Generac generator.

PWRCELL advertisement: "A Smarter Way to Power Your Home. REQUEST A FREE QUOTE! ACT NOW TO RECEIVE A \$300 SPECIAL OFFER!* (844) 989-2328. *Offer value when purchased at retail. Solar panels sold separately."

LeafFilter advertisement: "NO MORE GUTTER CLEANING, OR YOUR MONEY BACK GUARANTEED! CALL US TODAY FOR A FREE ESTIMATE 1-855-536-8838. 15% OFF YOUR ENTIRE PURCHASE* AND! 10% OFF SENIOR & MILITARY DISCOUNTS + 5% OFF TO THE FIRST 50 CALLERS!*" Includes phone number 1-855-536-8838.