

Happy Holidays

SERVING UNION AND WALLOWA COUNTIES SINCE 1896

THE OBSERVER



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NOTE TO READERS

Due to the postal holiday, we will not publish a paper on Saturday, Dec. 25, but have included comics for Dec. 25 in today's paper. We will publish our next edition on Tuesday, Dec. 28.

Optimism abounds after recent storms

Substantial snowfalls boost anticipation of snowy, wet, cold winter

By **KATY NESBITT**
For EO Media Group

PENDLETON — After a relatively dry autumn, the days leading up to the winter solstice finally brought the prediction of a La Nina year to fruition.

According to the National Weather Service website, there is a 95% chance that La Nina conditions are favored to continue in the Northern Hemisphere until April.

The oceanservice.noaa.gov website defines La Nina as weather occurrences affected by stronger than average trade winds that push more warm water toward Asia. Off the West Coast of the Americas, upwelling increases, bringing cold, nutrient-rich water to the surface. These cold waters in the Pacific Ocean push the jet stream northward and tend to lead to drought in the Southern U.S. and heavy rains and flooding in the Pacific Northwest and Canada.

During a La Nina year, winter temperatures are warmer than normal in the Southern U.S. and cooler than normal in the Northern U.S. La Nina can also lead to a more severe hurricane season.

For Northeastern Oregon, the National Weather Service's Climate Prediction Center reports the region should expect a 50% to 60% chance of above-average snowfall and a 50% to 60% chance of lower-than-average temperatures.

Recent snowfalls have boosted the anticipation of a snowy, wet and cold winter. A look around the region's snow sensors reveals the current conditions for the Blue and Wallowa mountains.

High Ridge, in the Blue Mountains east of Pendleton, sits at 4,920 feet. Measurements on

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Alex Wittwer/The Observer

Dean Varney closes the door on his delivery truck — serial number 9202882 — at the United States Post Office on Washington Avenue in La Grande on Tuesday, Dec. 21, 2021. Varney is retiring and will make his last delivery on Christmas Eve.

ONE LAST DELIVERY

DEDICATED USPS POSTMAN DEAN VARNEY TO RETIRE ON CHRISTMAS EVE

By **DICK MASON**
The Observer

LA GRANDE — Dean Varney does not know which home on his La Grande route will be the last one he will deliver mail to on Christmas Eve.

But Varney, a U.S. Postal Service letter carrier, does know this — it will be a delivery to remember.

Varney will make his final delivery on Friday, Dec. 24, likely around 4 p.m. after delivering to the homes, apartments and business on his west La Grande route, which runs from Pioneer Park south to the vicinity of Grande Ronde Hospital.

"It will be at the end of an emotional day," he said.

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Alex Wittwer/The Observer

Dean Varney sorts through packages, scanning them in before placing them inside his delivery truck at the United States Post Office in La Grande on Tuesday, Dec. 21, 2021.

Holiday essentials

Hospital employees continue their work from the front lines

By **DAVIS CARBAUGH**
The Observer

LA GRANDE — While most families are sitting by the fire exchanging gifts on Christmas morning, some of the most important jobs still need to be done.

A select group of employees at Grande Ronde Hospital keep the hospital up and running during the holidays, making sure essential jobs are still in operation in case of emergency. While it may not always be ideal to work

on the holidays, local hospital workers commit to keeping the community safe.

"Most people that work the holidays have a real giving spirit, I think," said Karen Schatzlein, a medical technologist in the Grande Ronde Hospital lab. "It's a great team effort, even between the lab and the nurses and the doctors."

Around this time of year, some departments at Grande Ronde Hospital use a rotating schedule for who works on the holidays, while some rely on volunteers. Schatzlein has worked at the hospital for more than four years and has worked every Christmas.

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Abigail Stonebreaker/Contributed Photo

Registered nurse Misty McClure walks down a decorated hallway in Grande Ronde Hospital's Family Birthing Center on Monday, Dec. 20, 2021. Many hospital employees volunteer to work on the holidays to accommodate coworkers and keep the hospital fully staffed.

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WEATHER Full forecast on the back of B section

	Tonight 28 LOW Snow, 1-2"		Friday 35/23 A.M. snow, 1-2"
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