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Ready to get started

New chamber director praises the vibrant business community in Union County

By **DICK MASON**
The Observer

LA GRANDE — Scott Newman, the new executive director of the Union County Chamber of Commerce, is in a paradoxical position.

Newman, who came to the Grande Ronde Valley from Wisconsin, is a new face in

Union County, but his learning curve about the community is anything but steep because of his family ties in the area.

“It is kind of cool. It is why the move here has been easy,” Newman said during a gathering Tuesday, Jan. 18, at the Union County Chamber of Commerce’s office.

Newman is joining three members of his family who already live here — his wife, Kimberly Newman, who is executive assistant to Eastern Oregon University President Tom Insko; his daughter, Jillian, a freshman at EOU; and his sister, Rae Ette Newman, a professor in EOU’s college of education.

In addition, Newman moved here with his youngest son, Korey, who is set to be a sophomore at La Grande High School. Newman’s oldest son, Jaece, chose to remain in Wisconsin.

Newman comes to Union County armed with a firsthand understanding of what running businesses involves. He formerly was an owner of TECH Enterprises, a family company based in Madison, Wisconsin, that manufactures and distributes household cleaning products.

Newman also operated a disc jockey business in Wisconsin for 20 years, playing at events such as wedding receptions and parties.

Newman said he is impressed with the business climate he has found in Union County.

“The environment is fantastic. It is very vibrant,” he said. “I am looking forward

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A Union County deputy sheriff drives past Raul's Cantina at night in La Grande on Tuesday, Jan. 18, 2022. Local law enforcement have seen a slight uptick in the number of DUII related incidents involving drugs, while alcohol related DUIIs have remained steady.

Alex Wittwer/The Observer

Increase in drug-impaired DUIIs prompts changes from law enforcement

By **DAVIS CARBAUGH**
The Observer

LA GRANDE — Local law enforcement agencies in Union County are continuing to take a proactive approach to enforcing impaired driving laws, but with changes in the enforcement of controlled substances, this approach has taken a slightly different angle.

While overall numbers of driving under the influence of intoxicants have stayed steady, controlled substance DUIIs have increased locally and statewide, prompting a more in-depth approach to how law enforcement conducts its protocol. Measure 110 still is in its early stages of decriminalizing substances, and it remains to be seen if the new measure will impact the quantity of controlled substance-related DUIIs in Oregon.

According to information provided by La Grande Police Lt. Jason Hays, in 2021 the La Grande Police Department and Union County Sheriff's Office recorded a combined 51 DUII arrests through Dec. 21. That compares with 44 in 2020, 58 in 2019 and 54 in 2018.

Of the 51 DUII arrests through Dec. 21, 2021, 38 involved alcohol and 13 resulted from drugs — a noticeable shift in controlled substance DUIIs from 2018 when 49 arrests were from alcohol and the remaining five were related to intoxicant factors other than alcohol.

Extra steps

With alcohol-related DUIIs, a blood-alcohol test is an easy way to determine whether someone has been

MEASURE 110

On Nov. 3, 2020, Oregon voters passed Measure 110, approving two shifts in how the state deals with the use of illegal drugs. First, the measure reduces penalties for drug possession, making Oregon the first state to decriminalize the personal possession of illegal drugs. Secondly, the anticipated savings achieved from the current cost of enforcing criminal drug possession penalties will be combined with marijuana sales revenue to fund a new drug addiction treatment and recovery grant program.

— Measure 110 Background Brief (www.oregon-legislature.gov)

drinking and approximately how much they have consumed. When it comes to substance-related driving arrests, police have to take extra steps.

When a driver is pulled over and suspected of driving impaired, the officer first speaks with the individual and conducts a field sobriety test. If law enforcement has a reason to suspect impairment after the field sobriety test, a blood-alcohol concentration test is then conducted with the driver's consent. If the BAC test shows a zero and the driver still is suspected of being impaired, a drug recognition expert, or DRE, is called to evaluate the driver's status.

DREs are law enforcement officers trained to identify driving impairments that result from substances other than alcohol. The program was established by the International Association of Chiefs of Police in California more than 35 years ago.

The DRE protocol uses a three-step process to determine whether the driver is impaired, discover if the impairment involves controlled substances or a medical condition and ascertain which

drugs are causing the driver's impairment. This course of action is based on a knowledge of observable signs related to drug use.

The DREs perform their impairment evaluations at controlled environments such as a police station. A major difference between the standard roadside BAC test and the DRE's drug impairment test is the evaluation is not typically performed roadside and is usually done after the arrest.

According to IACP, the evaluation typically takes about an hour. The officer monitors the driver's behavior, appearance and vital signs.

In addition, psychophysical tests are performed to measure judgment, information processing and coordination. In short, the process to evaluate a controlled substance-related DUII takes a bit more digging than observing the sometimes obvious effects of impairment present during a strictly alcohol-related DUII.

Roughly 200 people are part of the DRE program in Oregon, across state, county and municipal law enforcement organizations.

With DREs conducting the evaluations after the arrest, police officers can return to patrolling. Even so, added precautions from a non-DRE arresting officer can have an impact. According to Hays, La Grande Police do not use body cams, but the use of digital recorders assists law enforcement in gathering evidence during the initial arrest and investigation for a DUII.

“The probable cause for arrest generally comes from the standardized field sobriety tests after the traffic stop is initiated and signs indicate the operator

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North Powder briefly back to distance learning

Move to virtual classes comes after students were exposed to virus at school

By **DICK MASON**
The Observer

NORTH POWDER — An outbreak of COVID-19 has forced the North Powder School District to shut down in-person instruction and provide only online instruction.

The changes are for Wednesday, Jan. 19 and

Thursday, Jan 20. The North Powder School District has a four-day school week.

“This is what is best for the health and safety of everyone,” said North Powder School District Superintendent Lance Dixon.

The move to online instruction, formally

known as Comprehensive Distance Learning, was made after 11 students tested positive for COVID-19 over the past week. The number of students who were exposed via close contact is now being determined, but Dixon said the there are many. He said that doing contract tracing was extremely difficult because there have been so many

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The Observer, File

An outbreak of COVID-19 in the North Powder School District has forced the school district to provide only online instruction on Wednesday and Thursday, Jan. 19-20, 2022.

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WEATHER

Full forecast on the back of B section		
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		Friday 41/23 Partly sunny

CONTACT US

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Issue 8	More contact info on Page A4.
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SATURDAY WEIGHING IN ON HOMELESSNESS

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