

## TODAY

In 1864, Lt. Gen. Ulysses S. Grant assumed command as General-in-Chief of the Union armies in the Civil War.

In 1912, the Girl Scouts of the USA had its beginnings as Juliette Gordon Low of Savannah, Georgia, founded the first American troop of the Girl Guides.

In 1925, Chinese revolutionary leader Sun Yat-sen died in Beijing.

In 1947, President Harry S. Truman announced what became known as the "Truman Doctrine" to help Greece and Turkey resist Communism.

In 1955, legendary jazz musician Charlie "Bird" Parker died in New York at age 34.

In 1971, Hafez Assad was confirmed as president of Syria in a referendum.

In 1980, a Chicago jury found John Wayne Gacy Jr. guilty of the murders of 33 men and boys. (The next day, Gacy was sentenced to death; he was executed in May 1994.)

In 1987, the musical play "Les Misérables" opened on Broadway.

In 1994, the Church of England ordained its first women priests.

In 2003, Elizabeth Smart, the 15-year-old girl who vanished from her bedroom nine months earlier, was found alive in a Salt Lake City suburb with two drifters, Brian David Mitchell and Wanda Barzee. (Mitchell is serving a life sentence; Barzee was released from prison in September 2018.)

In 2011, fifteen passengers were killed when a tour bus returning from a Connecticut casino scraped along a guard rail on the outskirts of New York City, tipped on its side and slammed into a pole that sheared it nearly end to end. (Driver Ophadell Williams was later acquitted of manslaughter and negligent homicide.)

In 2020, the stock market had its biggest drop since the Black Monday crash of 1987 as fears of economic fallout from the coronavirus crisis deepened; the Dow industrials plunged more than 2,300 points, or 10%. The NCAA canceled its basketball tournaments because of the coronavirus, after earlier planning to play in empty arenas. The NHL joined the NBA in suspending play. Major League Baseball delayed the start of its season by at least two weeks. (An abbreviated 60-game season would begin in July.)

**Today's Birthdays:** Politician, diplomat and civil rights activist Andrew Young is 90. Actor Barbara Feldon is 89. Actor-singer Liza Minnelli is 76. Sen. Mitt Romney, R-Utah, is 75. Singer-songwriter James Taylor is 74. Former Sen. Kent Conrad, D-N.D., is 74. Rock singer-musician Bill Payne (Little Feat) is 73. Actor Jon Provost (TV: "Lassie") is 72. Author Carl Hiaasen is 69. Rock musician Steve Harris (Iron Maiden) is 66. Actor Lesley Manville is 66. Actor Jerry Levine is 65. Singer Marlon Jackson (The Jackson Five) is 65. Actor Jason Beghe is 62. Actor Courtney B. Vance is 62. Actor Titus Welliver is 60. Former MLB All-Star Darryl Strawberry is 60. Actor Julia Campbell is 59. Actor Jake Weber is 59. Sen. Tammy Duckworth, D-Ill., is 54. Actor Aaron Eckhart is 54. CNN reporter Jake Tapper is 53. Rock musician Graham Coxon is 53. Country musician Tommy Bales (Flynnville Train) is 49. Actor Rhys Coiro is 43. Country singer Holly Williams is 41. Actor Samm (cq) Levine is 40. Actor Jaimie Alexander is 38. Actor Tyler Patrick Jones is 28.

## CORRECTION

The Page A2 story "Community Band Northeast receives Wild-horse Grant," published Saturday, March 5, misstated when rehearsals begin for the band's end-of-term concert. The rehearsals are set to begin at 7 p.m. on March 28 at Eastern Oregon University.

## LOTTERY

Wednesday, March 9, 2022

**Megabucks**

7-19-30-33-40-41

Jackpot: \$2.7 million

**Lucky Lines**

3-6-11-16-17-22-26-31

Estimated jackpot: \$26,000

**Powerball**

13-22-34-51-67

Powerball: 10

Power Play: 2

Jackpot: \$112 million

**Win for Life**

32-41-61-77

**Pick 4**

1 p.m.: 4-4-9-7

4 p.m.: 1-3-2-3

7 p.m.: 0-8-4-7

10 p.m.: 3-5-6-5

Thursday, March 10, 2022

**Lucky Lines**

3-5-10-15-19-22-28-31

Jackpot: \$27,000

**Pick 4**

1 p.m.: 9-0-6-1

4 p.m.: 5-9-0-4

7 p.m.: 9-6-4-1

10 p.m.: 5-6-9-0

## Mendoza earns high marks in review

## La Grande School Board extends superintendent's contract

By DICK MASON

The Observer

LA GRANDE — La Grande School District Superintendent George Mendoza earned high marks in his latest performance evaluation.

On Wednesday, March 10, the members of the La Grande School Board indicated approval and appreciation for the superintendent.

"You continue to exceed our expectations of a superintendent," said Robin Maille, chair of the La Grande School Board, in a letter she read at the meeting.

Maille said Mendoza received high marks in the nine professional standards the board set for him. The review credited the superintendent with "accomplished" in the areas of visionary leadership, policy and governance, communication and community relations, effective management, resource management, ethical leadership and labor relations. Mendoza was rated by the board as "effective" in the areas of curriculum planning and development and instructional leadership.

The board rated Mendoza as "accomplished" in meeting the goals of the school district's strategic plan, which includes ensuring that all students are ready to learn, fostering increased academic success and developing engaged lifelong learners.

The board also commended Mendoza for his effective communication during the COVID-19 pandemic.

"You have worked diligently through the year to maintain communications with district partners, families and community members to share information about the changing school safety requirements, so that our schools could stay open despite the continued impacts of the pandemic," Maille said.

She said Mendoza's strong leadership was



Alex Wittwer/EO Media Group, File

La Grande School District Superintendent George Mendoza delivers the opening address at the La Grande High School class of 2021 commencement on Saturday, June 5, 2021. Mendoza received high marks in his job performance review from the La Grande School Board on Wednesday, March 10, 2022.

especially important in the midst of the unsettling pandemic.

"You have been a steady force in our district and the region, and we appreciate and value your leadership during this time," Maille said.

The board also credited Mendoza with doing an excellent job of looking to the future.

"In planning for the future, you have worked with staff to identify new sources of funding to keep our district strong despite a deceased enrollment resulting from the pandemic and changing family priorities," Maille said.

The board chair noted that over the past year the La Grande School District

has experienced a significant turnover in administrative staff and that Mendoza has handled the changeover well.

"You have worked closely with this new staff and those in changed roles to provide mentoring and leadership," she said.

The board, Maille said, has agreed to extend Mendoza's contract with the school district. Mendoza presently has about two years left on his contract.

Mendoza came to La Grande from the Morrow County School District, where he was an assistant superintendent. He is a 1997 graduate of Eastern Oregon University and a member of its board of trustees.

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## La Grande School District may cut 10 positions

## Officials cite falling enrollment in the district as reason for cuts

By DICK MASON

The Observer

LA GRANDE — A budget shortfall caused by declining enrollment may force the La Grande School District to reduce staffing by 10 positions in the 2022-23 school year.

The good news is that there would be no layoffs since reductions would be made through attrition, according to La Grande School District Superintendent George Mendoza. The positions that would be cut are either not filled, will be vacated due to retirement and the like, or the employee will be moved to another position within the district.

Mendoza told the La Grande School Board that three full-time teaching positions, one administrative position and six classified staff positions would be cut as a result of the reductions. Classified positions include cooks, custodians and maintenance staff. The people in



The Observer, File

La Grande Middle School students in May 2013 visit their lockers before heading to class following lunch. A budget shortfall caused by declining enrollment may force the La Grande School District to reduce staffing by 10 positions in the 2022-23 school year, including a full-time teaching position at the middle school.

these positions who are not retiring or resigning will be transferred to other positions in the school district.

"They will be involuntary transfers," Mendoza said.

The superintendent is recommending that one teaching position be cut at La Grande Middle School, Island City Elementary School and La Grande High School. A classroom teacher position would be cut at the middle school, a core teaching position would be cut at the high

school, and a behavior program teacher for students in kindergarten through second grade would be cut at Island City Elementary.

Mendoza attributes the enrollment decline to the COVID-19 pandemic. The school district's enrollment, which is now 2,130, is down 230 students since the pandemic hit La Grande two years ago. The decline is having an impact on the school district's budget since it receives about \$9,000 from the state per student.

"Our general fund is

shrinking," Mendoza said.

The superintendent said there has been an increase in the number of students being home-schooled or taking classes through online programs. Mendoza said the school district will be contacting families of students who are no longer enrolled to find out why they left and encourage them to have their children return.

"Our goal is to reach out to families and communicate with them about their plans and intentions," Mendoza said.

## Last-minute filings alters commissioner races

By ANTONIO SIERRA

East Oregonian

UMATILLA COUNTY — David Nelson made a sudden return to local politics on Tuesday, March 8.

On the last day candidates could file for local office ahead of the May 17 election, Nelson, a former state senator, joined a packed race to replace Position 1 Commissioner George Murdock.

The Pendleton resident represented District 29 as a Republican in the Oregon Senate from 1997-2013, including a stint as the majority leader. After retiring from the Legislature, Nelson served on the Eastern Oregon University Board of Trustees before stepping off in 2020.

Then-Commissioner Bill Hansell won election to succeed Nelson in

the senate. A decade later, Nelson now is seeking the county board seat Hansell once held.

It's not unprecedented in Oregon for legislators to seek county office after serving in Salem. Former Republican Minority Leader Herman Baertschiger left the senate in 2020 after he was elected to a seat on the Josephine County Board of Commissioners. And in 2016, former state Rep. Jessica Vega Pederson successfully ran for a county commissioner seat in Multnomah County, although unlike Nelson, both legislators immediately transitioned from state to county office.

While Nelson brings plenty of name recognition to the race, he won't have a glide path to a seat on

the board. Before Nelson entered his name, five other candidates already filed.

Two business owners — Susan Bower of Pendleton and Cindy Timmons of Milton-Freewater — were the first to join the race. The rest of the field is composed of Bob Barton, a Hermiston construction business owner; Jesse Bonifer, an Athena city councilor and Second Amendment activist; and Alvin Young, a Hermiston store manager.

A late entry means voters also will weigh in on Position 2 in the May primary. Rick Pullen, a former Umatilla County employee, filed a last-minute challenge to incumbent Commissioner John Shafer. Shafer's other challenger

is conservative activist HollyJo Beers.

Regardless of the results during the primary, the two candidates who get the most votes in each commission race will advance to a Nov. 8 runoff.

Most races for offices that represent Umatilla and Morrow counties will not be competitive, but state Rep. Bobby Levy, R-Echo, is facing a challenge in the Republican primary. Skye Farnam, a Summerville business owner, is seeking to oust Levy. Farnam ran for the District 58 seat in 2018 as an independent but lost to then-incumbent Greg Barreto.

State Rep. Greg Smith, R-Heppner, the incumbent in District 57, is all but assured another term in Salem after drawing no Republican or Democratic opponents.

## IN BRIEF

## Driver fatally injured in Interstate 84 crash

UNION COUNTY

— An automobile crash on Interstate 84 in Union County resulted in the death of one individual on Wednesday, March 9, according to Oregon State Police.

The driver of a Mercedes GLS, later identified by OSP as Brian Burton, sustained fatal injuries due to a Freightliner commercial motor vehicle colliding with his car in the eastbound lanes.

Burton, a 59-year-old from Portland, stopped his car in the roadway in a traffic backup related to a previous CMV crash on I-84 near milepost 259. A CMV operated by Eddi Morales, a 30-year-old from Othello, Washington, was unable to stop upon rounding a curve — the CMV collided with the left side of Burton's vehicle.

According to the press release from OSP, Burton sustained fatal injuries and was pronounced deceased. Helen Burton, a 62-year-old from Portland, was in the passenger seat and was uninjured. Morales was not injured.

I-84 eastbound lanes remained closed for approximately five hours. According to the press release, OSP is investigating icy roadways and speed as contributing factors in the automobile collision.

OSP was assisted in the investigation by Union County Fire and the Oregon Department of Transportation.

## Masks still required at Grande Ronde Hospital

LA GRANDE —

Grande Ronde Hospital in La Grande will continue to require that masks be worn inside its buildings.

Oregon's mask mandates for schools and indoor settings are set to be lifted on Saturday, March 12, but the Oregon Health Authority will still require the wearing of masks at health facilities throughout Oregon.

Grande Ronde Hospital released a statement to remind the public that the hospital will require staff, patients and visitors to wear masks in its facilities and to ask for patience with front-line workers and screeners.

## Plane lands safely in Ladd Canyon after power failure

LA GRANDE — The pilot of a small plane made an emergency landing on the southeast edge of Ladd Canyon on Interstate 84 on Thursday, March 10.

The landing was made by Portland pilot Brian Lew Moentenich, 74, whose plane lost power at an altitude of 8,000 feet, according to Lt. Daniel Conner of the Oregon State Police. The plane landed safely in the westbound lanes of I-84 about 14 miles southeast of La Grande at about 2 p.m.

"He had to land between semis," Conner said.

Some truck drivers, Conner said, pulled their vehicles off to the side of the freeway to allow the plane space to land.

Soon after the plane landed, an aircraft mechanic was brought in to repair the engine. Once the mechanic's work was completed the pilot and his passenger, Elizabeth-Anne Hall, 68, of Portland, took off from the same stretch of freeway. The takeoff was made after traffic was slowed on the interstate to create space for the plane's pilot to taxi, Conner said.

Hall and Moentenich both said they felt very fortunate and were appreciative of the help they were receiving from the OSP and the Oregon Department of Transportation, which were controlling traffic.

"They were very grateful," Conner said.

— The Observer