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Live shows return to La Grande

HQ gears up for regular slate of live events for the first time since 2021

By **DAVIS CARBAUGH**
The Observer

LA GRANDE — Live music events are coming back to La Grande.

Live event venue HQ is gearing up toward holding a regular schedule of live events for the first time since last summer. Described as a creative media studio and live event venue, HQ is set to host a slew of spring concerts and weekly events as COVID-19 numbers remain low in Union County.

"I think as a community we're still hiding in our caves a little, so I'm really encouraging people to kind of step through that veil of uncomfortability and come out to some shows," HQ co-owner Chris Jennings said.

HQ, 112 Depot St., this month resumed its weekly open mic night, held on most Thursdays from 7-10 p.m. Admission to the open stage is free, and all are welcome to take part. Acts can include music, comedy, spoken word and anything in between.

"We're going to get our open stages rolling," Jennings said. "We're trying to get people back out and comfortable with each other, around music and jokes and the open stage."

After lacking a regular slate of concert events since last summer, HQ will be bringing regional and local talent onto its stage. The co-owners at HQ have one show scheduled for March and a couple in April so far.

The first big event coming to La Grande is Portland band Horse Feathers, with Nick Delfs opening. The show is scheduled for March 24 — tickets are \$12 online (www.lagrandehq.com/tickets) and \$15 at the door. The venue will serve beverages at its in-house bar during the events.

"We hope people can get out to that show, not only for their own well-being, but as a way to get back in and support downtown culture and engagement with music," Jennings said.

In early April, Klamath Falls artist Arthur Buezo will return to La Grande after visiting the venue last spring. Tylor and the Train Robbers are scheduled for mid-April, and HQ is continuing to schedule visiting artists moving into spring and summer months.

In the wake of Oregon dropping its statewide mandate on March 12, HQ is allowing attendees to make their own choice regarding mask

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Jillian Nelson digs in for a squat on Saturday, March 12, 2022, during the Wildcat Lifting Club's competition at La Grande Middle School. Nelson earned second-place in the girls lifting contest.
Alex Wittwer/
EO Media Group

Raising the bar

La Grande Middle School students sharpen weightlifting skills, sportsmanship through Wildcat Lifting Club

By **DAVIS CARBAUGH**
The Observer

LA GRANDE — The La Grande Middle School Wildcat Lifting Club is pushing the limits and setting personal bests.

La Grande Middle School students on Saturday, March 12, competed admirably in their winter weightlifting event for the new lifting club. The group encourages middle school students of all sizes and skill levels to learn weightlifting techniques, while creating a camaraderie between teammates.

"Everyone on the team is super supportive," eighth-grader Jillian Nelson said. "Even if you don't get it, they still cheer you on."

La Grande Middle School history teacher Nico Veloz Espinola started the Wildcat Lifting Club this school year. A student-teacher through Eastern Oregon University, Veloz Espinola saw an opportunity for a competitive lifting group at the middle school.

"When I got here I saw that they had lifting equipment, but no lifting going on," Veloz Espinola said.

Veloz Espinola, a power-



Jaiden Wall competes in the La Grande Middle School Wildcat Lifting Club's winter competition in the LMS gym on Saturday, March 12, 2022.
Alex Wittwer/EO Media Group

lifter himself, has competed in lifting events and felt a desire to help young athletes learn the ropes of the sport.

"I thought it would be a really cool opportunity to teach these kids some general fitness," he said. "With my experience with competitions, we

can take that general fitness and make it a little competitive and a little more than just a workout group."

Boys and girls compete side-by-side through in-house competitions at the La Grande Middle School gymnasium, using a scoring system that

compiles weight, age and gender. The system, which is called a DOTS score, allows individuals of different size to compete against each other in a way that takes into account each individual performance.

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Local legislator makes offer on Vale newspaper



Les Zaitz works in 2018 at his newspaper, the Malheur Enterprise in Vale. He put the paper up for sale in early 2022, and Rep. Greg Smith, R-Heppner, a frequent subject of the Enterprise's investigative work, in an email to Zaitz offered to buy the paper. Zaitz, however, is not selling to Smith.

By **ANTONIO SIERRA**
East Oregonian

VALE — Greg Smith's offer to buy the Malheur Enterprise came in a postscript.

An email exchange between Smith and Les Zaitz, the publisher and editor of the small weekly newspaper in Vale, over an editorial led to an offer to take the Enterprise off the market.

According to the email chain obtained by the East Oregonian, Zaitz wrote to inform Smith, the



Smith

state representative for District 57 and the Malheur County economic development director, that he intended to publish an editorial critical of Smith and asked him for comment.

"I'm preparing an editorial for next week about the Malheur County Court's management of your company's contract," he wrote. "You will, in part, get a pass because you can't be blamed by taxpayers for getting what you can

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