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La Grande Middle School student Zackary Simonis works on a Chromebook computer during class on Thursday, April 7, 2022. School officials said the utilization of Chromebooks and Google products because of the pandemic will continue even after case rates drop.

LA GRANDE SCHOOL DISTRICT

Bond backers tout 'perfect scenario'

Measure 31-105 would fund \$4.854M school bond, plus kick in \$4M grant from state

By **DICK MASON**
The Observer

LA GRANDE — Supporters of the La Grande School District hope that regional history repeats itself next month.

La Grande School District voters will be determining the fate of a proposed \$4.854 million bond in the May 17 mail election. The bond would help pay for the construction of a new academic and athletic center that would replace the aging Annex building just outside La Grande Middle School. If voters approve Measure 31-105, the La Grande School District will receive a \$4 million Oregon School Capital Improvement Matching program grant from the state to help fund the construction of the new building.

Suzy Mayes, a retired educator who is co-chair of the bond's political action committee, Citizens for School Renovation, notes that school district patrons would essentially be getting a 2-for-1 bargain, paying for a bond and getting a matching grant almost worth the same amount at no cost.

"It is a no-brainer, you will double your investment," Mayes said during a Bond Information Night session at Central Elementary School on Thursday, April 7.

Similar 2-for-1 opportunities proved too good for voters to pass up in the Imbler, North Powder, Union, Enterprise and Wallowa school districts between 2010 and 2021. Voters passed bonds for capital construction when the state guaranteed each school district a matching grant of between \$3-\$4 million.

Not once did voters in Union or Wallowa counties reject a bond when there was a matching grant during this span. In many cases, the bonds passed overwhelmingly. The Imbler bond, for example, passed in 2010 with 75% support, and in 2019 in Union, its

See, **Bond**/Page A6

SILVER LINING

Schools will continue to use new skills, tools acquired during pandemic

By **ALEX WITTWER** • EO Media Group

LA GRANDE — More than two years have passed since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic in Oregon, which saw businesses and schools close down repeatedly.

Schools were forced to make sweeping changes to continue operations. Some of those changes are here to stay.

"One of the things that will be sticking around for us here at Pendleton High School is that all of the teachers have become familiar with the Google platforms, especially Google Classroom," said Principal Patrick Dutcher. "Now it's been two years of running their lesson plans and assignments there. That helps with retention if kids are absent. I mean, obviously the state's going back to more of an accountability when it comes to recording absences, but that has allowed families to get online to see what they've missed because the teachers do a really good job of updating the Google classrooms, especially for the daily assignments."

Pendleton had already planned to add an online teaching component to their curriculum, but the pandemic accelerated that need. State and federal grants also allowed



Alex Wittwer/EO Media Group

Ronan MacDonald, a student at La Grande Middle School, works on an assignment during class on Thursday, April 7, 2022. After two years of the pandemic and a return to in-class learning, mainstays of the remote learning environment — including Google classrooms and assigned Chromebooks — are here to stay, according to school officials.

the school to enact a one-to-one plan, which gives every student a Chromebook to be used for school.

"If you're a student at Pendleton High School, you have a Chromebook assigned to you at the start," Dutcher said. "A lot of teachers were incorporating that technology into their lesson plans as it is, knowing each kid has access to a Chromebook."

But while schools now have the ability

to do remote learning in the case of emergencies, snow days will still be in place due to the chaos of switching to a remote learning environment on short notice.

"Snow days are what they are. I think it's hard to get people organized on the fly," Dutcher said. "You know, there's something about being a kid and the Americana of having a snow day. But, as

See, **Learning**/Page A6

Trooper rises to the challenge

State trooper comes to the rescue with pizza for hungry students from Union High School

By **JUSTIN DAVIS**
Blue Mountain Eagle

PRAIRIE CITY — A broken-down school bus, hungry teenagers and a concerned Oregon State Police trooper all crossed paths on the night of Feb. 11, and the

outcome was a win for all concerned.

Trooper William Blood, working out of OSP's John Day outpost, was on patrol that Friday when he came across a disabled Union

See, **Trooper**/Page A7



Justin Davis/Blue Mountain Eagle

Trooper William Blood stands beside his patrol car on Tuesday, April 5, 2022. The Oregon State Police recognized Blood for helping a busload of Union High School basketball players who were stranded in Prairie City on Feb. 11.

INDEX

- Classified B2
- Comics B5
- Crossword B2
- Dear Abby B6
- Horoscope B2
- Local A2
- Lottery A2
- Obituaries A5
- Opinion A4
- Outdoors B1
- Sports A9
- Sudoku B5

WEATHER Full forecast on the back of B section



Tonight
27 LOW
A bit of snow



Sunday
41/22
A.M. snow showers

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