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MAKING A DIFFERENCE amid the destruction

Worldwide connections link fundraising efforts in La Grande to those in need

By **DAVIS CARBAUGH** • The Observer

LA GRANDE — Good Samaritans are showing that every donation, even from the other side of the world, makes a difference.

La Grande resident Anne Morrison was one of the organizers of a recent demonstration at Max Square to raise funds for those in need in Ukraine. Her family connection to the frontlines in the war-torn country is ensuring that contributions from rural Oregon have a far-reaching effect.

Morrison organized the demonstration on March 12 alongside Kate Gekeler and Cheryl Simpson, with live music from Al MacLeod. The event raised \$21,000 for

Ukrainian citizens in the country as well as refugees fleeing the war. Local fundraising efforts continue that will put supplies and aid directly into the hands of those in need.

Morrison's cousin Ian Dempsey, of Colorado, met his wife, Sofia, while on a mission trip in Ukraine nearly a decade ago. The couple have numerous existing connections in war-torn areas of Ukraine, one of which involved assisting Sofia Dempsey's sister and young nieces in fleeing to the United States.

Inna Stasiuk and her daughters, Valariia and

See, Aid/Page A6



Anne Morrison/Contributed Photo
Valariia and Alina Stasiuk sleep during their first night in the United States in early April after Inna Stasiuk and her daughters fled Ukraine. A local connection in La Grande helped provide funds for the family's travel to safety, as well as supplies for Ukrainians in need.



Felipe Dana/The Associated Press
Ukrainian servicemen walk among debris of damaged buildings after a Russian attack in Kharkiv, Ukraine, Saturday, April 16, 2022.

Storied career comes to a close

Margaret Davidson will soon retire as Community Connection's executive director

By **DICK MASON**
The Observer

LA GRANDE — The small notice would have been easy to miss.

Forty-four years ago Margaret Davidson, now executive director of Community Connection of Northeast Oregon, spotted a small help wanted ad in a La Grande newspaper. It was for a job as a data entry clerk with an organization named the Eastern Oregon Community Development Council. Davidson, without giving it a second thought, applied and was hired.



Davidson

She had little inkling of what awaited.

"I was a student at Eastern Oregon University and I needed a part-time job. I had no idea I was launching a rewarding career," said Davidson, noting that the Eastern Oregon Community Development Council later became Community Connection of Northeast Oregon, an agency that serves those in need.

The career ignited by that 1978 help wanted ad will be ending soon, for Davidson is retiring at the end of April. She said her tenure has been as rewarding as it has been fulfilling.

"I have really enjoyed the journey," said Davidson, who first worked for Community Connection for one year, then left for three years because of budget cuts before returning and dedicating another 39 years to the organization.

Community Connection has grown tremendously during Davidson's 25-year tenure as executive director. The agency had a budget of \$2.3 million 1997, and last year it reached \$14 million, a direct reflection of the growth in the services it provides.

"She has done a fantastic job," said Steve McClure, chair of the Community Connection of Northeast Oregon's board. "She knows the organization from top to bottom and is very, very inclusive and listens to input."

'Master communicator'

Frank Thomas, who worked under Davidson at Community Connection for 21 years, credits Davidson with having a forward-thinking nature.

See, Retire/Page A6

New book includes priceless gems from children

Gerald Hopkins book is second in a series shares 'wisdom' of youth

By **DICK MASON**
The Observer

ISLAND CITY — Gerald Hopkins retired as an educator about five years ago, but he has not stopped sharing the joy he experienced while serving as a teacher and a principal for 33 years.

Book two of his series "Humor in the Class, or Why Christopher Columbus Sailed Away from His Wife," is proof. Volume 2, like volume 1, is filled with quotes from children in the schools where Hopkins worked,

KIDS SAY THE DARNDDEST THINGS

Some of Gerald Hopkins' favorite quotes from children in the new second volume of his "Humor in the Class, or Why Christopher Columbus Sailed Away from His Wife":
Teacher: How can you delay milk turning sour?
Student: Keep it in the cow.
Teacher: What does varicose mean?
Student: Nearby.
Teacher: What is a seizure?
Student: A Roman emperor.
Teacher: Why don't ants get sick?
Student: They have antibodies.

which are as humorous as they are heart-warming and enlightening.

Volume 2 features many gems teachers

at Hopkins' schools passed on, such as the answer a teacher received from a child asked to name the four seasons: "Salt, pepper, mustard and vinegar."

Participating in such exchanges or hearing them brought delight to Hopkins' career.

"Trying to see and hear the world through the eyes of a child adds zest and enjoyment and keeps all of us feeling young at heart. Seeing these special individuals share their lives and humor often brought a tear of happiness to my own life," Hopkins wrote in the introduction of his new book.

Hopkins wrote down comments from students as soon as he heard them. He would

See, Book/Page A6

INDEX

Classified.....B2	Home.....B1	Obituaries.....A5
Comics.....B7	Horoscope.....A4	Opinion.....A4
Crossword.....B2	Local.....A2	Sports.....A7
Dear Abby.....B8	Lottery.....A2	Sudoku.....B7

WEATHER Full forecast on the back of B section

 Tonight 33 LOW Showers around	 Wednesday 55/38 A shower
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