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GIVING BACK

OHSU students in La Grande set to embark on Global Brigades trip to Honduras

By **DAVIS CARBAUGH**
The Observer

LA GRANDE — A group of nursing students in La Grande are gearing up to take part in an international service project.

Nine students currently studying at the Oregon Health & Science University La Grande campus will embark on a full-week service project in Honduras this June, focusing on health-related outreach and sustainable development. The trip is student organized, with extensive fundraising efforts underway to afford the trip.

“For most of us, we are wanting to be able to have more experience caring for a more diverse population,” OHSU student Jessica Norton said. “We’d like to gain that experience with a more diverse community and increase access to the care that they’re unable to receive.”

The project is organized through Global Brigades, an international health and sustainable development nonprofit founded in 2007. The organization operates year-round, arranging trips for nursing students and other areas of study alike. The students take on the fundraising and trip planning process, while Global Brigades organizes the service week and gets the students where they need to be to help those in need.

Diana Siltanen, a clinical instructor at the La Grande OHSU campus, helped bring the Global Brigades trip to La Grande for the first time. The partnership stems from connections to OHSU campuses in Klamath Falls,



Oregon Health and Science University student Jessica Norton, left, and Brianna Humeston, right, are joined by clinical instructor Diana Siltanen on Tuesday, May 10, 2022, during a meal-delivery event for the group of La Grande nursing students who are raising funds for a service trip to Honduras this summer.

HOW TO DONATE

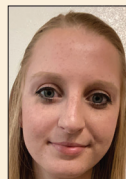
To learn more about making a direct contribution to the nursing students’ Global Brigades service trip, visit <https://fundraise.globalbrigades.org/empowered/chapter/oregon-health-and-sciences-university-medical-brigades-chapter>.

Monmouth and across the state. The nonprofit organization pioneers service trips to locations such as Honduras, Guatemala, Panama, Ghana and Greece.

In addition to Norton, the La Grande students participating in the trip are

Kylie Kennedy, Brianna Humeston, Sierra Ashley, Madison Conklin, Morgan Bogart, Tiana Williams, Amanda Vieira De Melo and Lexie Johnson.

For Kennedy, the buildup to the trip has been a worthwhile experience, creating a welcome camaraderie among OHSU students after the pandemic limited in-person interactions over



Ashley



Conklin



Bogart



Johnson

the last two years.

“We’ve been in school online for our first year and a half, so this has been our first term where we have classes together in person,” Kennedy said. “I think it’s been a great opportunity to really get to know people.”

Fundraising is a key component of taking part in the

See, **Giving/Page A6**

Opioid overdose uptick hits home

Nationwide drug-related overdose increase reaches La Grande, sparks local concern

Editor’s Note: This is the first part of a multi-story series addressing the trends related to opioid overdoses in Union County and across the nation. The series will include perspectives from law enforcement, the court system, medical professionals and more.

By **DAVIS CARBAUGH**
The Observer

LA GRANDE — An “alarming” increase in drug overdoses is not just an issue on the national news — it is here.

Opioid overdoses in particular accelerated during the pandemic, reaching towns all across the country, and the rising prevalence of synthetic opioids such as fentanyl has reached Union County.

“It’s a crisis and it is alarming,” La Grande Police Chief Gary Bell said. “I’ve been doing this job for nearly 29 years in this community and I have never seen the amount of drugs and the prevalence everywhere.”



Bell



Hays



McIlmoil



McQueeney

Overdoses surge

According to Bell, Union County reported 10 total calls for service for drug overdoses in 2020. In 2021, that total jumped up to 45 calls. Through the end of March of 2022, Union County reported 20 drug-related overdose calls — the quantity is a 567% increase from the same time-frame last year and puts the county on pace for more than 100 overdose calls by the end of the year.

In 2021 alone, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported nearly 108,000 drug overdose deaths in the United States — according to the study, approximately two thirds of those overdose deaths involved fentanyl or other synthetic opioids. The 15% increase in 2021 came on the heels of an even more drastic rise in 2020, when the CDC reported a 30% increase.

In addition to the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on substance abuse nationwide,

See, **Opioids/Page A6**

Union County declares drought emergency

County is experiencing one of its drier years since precipitation records started being kept 128 years ago

By **DICK MASON**
The Observer

LA GRANDE — Drought conditions are persisting throughout Union County despite the wet April it experienced.

Conditions have been so arid overall in 2022 that the Union County Board of Commissioners passed a resolution on Wednesday, May 11, declaring a drought emergency for the second consecutive year.

The declaration makes

Union County eligible for state and federal programs and grants that would help those affected by drought, said Union County Emergency Manager Nick Vora.

Vora said the large amount of precipitation Union County received in April did not reverse the drought, but did prevent it from getting worse. He said the April precipitation improved the moisture content of the upper levels of soil but did not boost

See, **Drought/Page A6**



Dick Mason/The Observer

The level of the Grande Ronde River, shown here on Thursday, May 12, 2022, in northwest La Grande, is about normal for this time of year due to a wet April. Drought conditions remain, though, and stream flows in Union County are expected to be low this summer.



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WEATHER Full forecast on the back of B section

	Tonight 27 Low Mostly cloudy		Wednesday 44/22 Low clouds
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CONTACT US

541-963-3161
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Email story ideas to news@lagrandeobserver.com.
More contact info on Page A4.