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Joyful return

By RONALD BOND
For The Observer

LA GRANDE — With very little being said in recent years about the Union County chapter of Special Olympics Oregon, Lis and JT Thorne noted there was some concern that the program had dropped altogether.

But the couple, who a few months ago took over as the local program coordinators for the organization, said the program is up and running once again after a hiatus that saw the group face the passing of a man who was the face of the organization for decades, Doug Trice, and a long pause due to COVID-19.

“With Doug passing, a lot of people are assuming that the program is gone,” Lis Thorne said. “It’s definitely a regrowth year, and we are trying to do the best we can. We’re full steam ahead.”

The Thornes, whose daughter, Dani, has been a Special Olympics athlete for about nine years,

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New leadership for the Union County chapter of Special Olympics Oregon and athletes preparing for regional games



Isabella Crowley/The Observer

JT Thorne high-fives Dennis Adams during practice at the Eastern Oregon University track in La Grande on Wednesday, July 6, 2022. The Special Olympics athletes are training to compete at the regional games in Hermiston for track on July 16 and in Oregon City for golf on July 17.

Special Olympics athletes, from left, Jennifer Coppin, Autumn Rush, Dennis Adams, Ranne Werner, Pete Crowell and Tommy Boren practice their softball throws at the Eastern Oregon University track in La Grande on Wednesday, July 6, 2022, in preparation for the upcoming Special Olympics Oregon regional games.

Isabella Crowley/The Observer



Poll shows a reason for GOP optimism

Republican State Leadership Committee poll suggests GOP has chance to win in November

By JULIA SHUMWAY
Oregon Capital Chronicle

SALEM — Republicans haven’t controlled any branch of Oregon government since Barack Obama’s first campaign for president — but they’re bullish this year about their legislative chances.

An internal poll memo produced for the national Republican State Leadership Committee and shared with the Capital Chronicle suggests that Republicans have a “rare opportunity” to win in November, thanks to low opinions of President Joe Biden and Oregon’s Democratic leaders.

“Voters across Oregon have had enough and view Republican state legislators as the remedy to get the state out of a downward spiral and back on the right track,” committee spokesperson Zach Kraft said in a statement.

All 60 House districts and 30 Senate districts are new this year following last year’s post-census legislative redistricting. Legislative Democrats controlled redistricting, and independent analyses like Dave’s Redistricting website suggest the new districts disproportionately benefit Democratic candidates.

But polls, both the internal poll released by Republicans and earlier public surveys, show that a majority of Oregon voters aren’t pleased with the state’s direction. More than 57% of the 600 likely voters surveyed by national GOP polling firm Cygnal between June 28-30 said the state was on the wrong track.

When asked about generic legislative candidates, nearly 35% said they would definitely vote for a Republican, and another 12% said they would probably vote for the Republican. The same numbers were 10.5% and 32% for Democrats, giving Republicans a nearly 5-point lead on generic legislative ballots.

About 52% of respondents said they disapproved of the job legislative Democrats were doing, and 57% said government would work better with a more partisan balance.

“There’s definitely a path for Republicans to a majority, and I don’t think that path has been there for the last 20 years,” said Senate Minority Leader Tim Knopp, R-Bend.

The Republican nominee for governor, Christine Drazan, had a 1-point lead over Democratic nominee Tina Kotek, with 32.4% of respondents saying they would vote for Drazan, 31.4% choosing Kotek and 24.4% opting for nonaffiliated candidate Betsy Johnson. Johnson released her own poll

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Remnants of Hot Lake’s firefighting legacy remain

A hillside reservoir once fed a hydrant system at Hot Lake

Hot Lake Springs, whose story as a hotel and a medical center dates back more than a century, has a history as rich as its mineral-filled water.



DICK MASON
THE ANSWER MAN

The site, not surprisingly, is filled with remnants of this past, including some that are keeping embers of a bygone firefighting era alive — two small hydrants that have been shut off for many decades.

The hydrants are survivors of an era when Hot Lake virtually had its own fire department. The system included a network of approximately 14 hydrants, all installed by Hot Lake’s owners about a century ago. This put Hot Lake in select company since at the time most fire hydrant systems were typically found only in incorporated towns and cities.

“Hot Lake was like a small municipality,” said Dick Roth, of Orting, Washington, a historian and author who has written six books about Union County’s history.

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Vance Orchard/Contributed Photo

Dick Roth, right, drives Hot Lake’s old Model TT fire engine in 1968 at the Eastern Oregon Livestock Show parade in Union.



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Tonight 66 LOW Mostly cloudy **Wednesday** 88/57 A t-storm around

CONTACT US

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