

# OLYMPICS

Continued from Page A1

became the LPCs earlier this year.

“We were, quote unquote, tapped for this by the state office due to us being some of the only ones that could take it on,” JT Thorne said.

Lis Thorne said in addition to Trice’s death in May 2020, the other co-LPC, Pam Thompson, retired, though she is still the Union County golf coach. Concerned the organization could fall away, the Thornes stepped in.

“We didn’t want the program to go by the wayside for Union County,” Lis Thorne said. “We know how much it has been a benefit for our own daughter with special needs, so here we are today.”

Financial issues at the state

level led to the cancellation of the regional games in 2019. Athletes locally still practiced but didn’t have a regional event.

Then came the pandemic, which added to the delay.

“It’s been three years since these athletes have been able to compete. It’s been four years since we’ve been to a state competition for track, golf, stuff like that,” Thorne said.

With a restructuring that has taken place at the state level and COVID restrictions lifted, those larger events are returning. There will be regional games in Hermiston for track on Saturday, July 16, and in Oregon City for golf on July 17. State games are not being held this year as the organization continues to rebuild.

The return has been met with joy, as could be expected, by the

athletes, the Thornes said.

“The general consensus from all the athletes is ‘thank God we’re back,’” Lis Thorne said.

“They’ve been wanting to come back for over a year, year and a half now. Everyone enjoys seeing their athlete friends.”

JT Thorne admitted some concern on how many participants would be out, but at their first practice in late May, those fears dropped. There are 11 athletes involved in track — 10 athletes and one helper — and six in golf.

“It was really good to see them come out at the first practice — as many that did. I personally was very afraid that a lot of them would be like, ‘I don’t want to do this anymore.’ We have our whole original team and then a couple more,” he said.

“It’s so good to see the posi-

tive attitudes between them all, too, the way they cheer each other on and encourage each other,” Lis Thorne added.

The growth of the athletes from Special Olympics is vital, and the Thornes said they have seen that firsthand with their own daughter, Dani.

“Once we got her into the program and watched her blossom with teammates and new friends — there are things she does now that she wouldn’t have done due to her comfortability with individuals,” JT Thorne said. “This has helped her to grow as a young lady and an athlete.”

Both noted the scene at a regional or state competition is unlike anything else.

“It is an amazing thing to see. It is a sight I believe everyone should come watch. It’s sports, friendship and competition in its

purest form,” JT Thorne said.

As the new leaders of the local chapter look to the future, adding sports is being considered. JT Thorne said soccer and bocci ball are among the events they hope to add as early as next year. The couple is also hoping to garner support to bring the regional games to Union County in the future. It’s a move that would go a long way to letting the community know the local chapter is thriving.

“That would be really big for the area,” JT Thorne said of the regional games. “It would give a sense of ownership to the athletes that it is happening in their own town. We were down for three years due to Doug’s passing (and when) COVID hit. (It’s important) to get out in front of everybody again, letting people know we are still here.”

# HOT LAKE

Continued from Page A1

The old hydrant system Roth is referring to was fed by an unorthodox and memorable source, a concrete reservoir on the south hill behind Hot Lake’s buildings. Water was pumped into the structure, which held thousands of gallons of water that flowed downhill through wooden pipes wrapped by wire.

The reservoir stopped being used many decades ago but it is still buoyant in Roth’s mind.

“I used to play up there,” said Roth, who grew up at Hot Lake in the 1940s and 1950s when it was owned by his parents, A.J. and Fern Roth.

Roth said wildlife were also attracted to the reservoir.

“Once I had to pull a dead deer out of there,” said Roth, who discussed Hot Lake’s former firefighting system in late June during a presentation at Grande Hot Springs RV Resort.

Another pillar of Hot Lake’s old firefighting system was its Ford-La Grande chemical hose truck. It was a Model TT fire engine manufactured in March of 1921.

The vehicle’s features included two 38-gallon chemical tanks and two hose baskets. The chemical tanks held soda, water and acid in separate compartments. When they needed to be used the tanks would be turned upside down, mixing the soda



Photos by Dick Mason/The Observer

The sign at Hot Lake Springs stands out against the blue sky on Friday, June 24, 2022. The historic complex, now owned by Michael and Tamarah Rysavy, has many features including hotel rooms, soaking pools and a movie theater.

and water with acid to create a compound used to extinguish blazes.

These tanks were dangerous once their chemicals were activated since this caused pressure to build within them. While this could result in exploding or burst tanks, Roth said he knows of no instances in which chemical tanks exploded at Hot Lake.

## The fire of 1934

Roth believes that the Model TT fire engine was last used on May 7, 1934, when a disastrous fire hit Hot Lake, destroying about two thirds of its 650-foot-long building complex, which included a hospital. He said the

fire may have been started by sparks created by uninsulated wires coming into contact with one another because of strong winds. Roth said the fire started in the attic of Hot Lake’s main building.

Hot Lake had 13 patients at the time, all of whom escaped unharmed and evacuated to Grande Ronde Hospital.

Roth said the blaze exposed the shortcomings of the era’s firefighting equipment.

“The fire consumed almost the entire wood portion of the complex and demonstrated the inadequacies of available early day firefighting equipment,” Roth wrote in his book “The



Dick Roth, the author of four books about Hot Lake’s history, puts together a display before a presentation on Thursday, June 23, 2022, at Grande Hot Springs RV Resort. Roth is shown with a 1909 fire extinguisher from Hot Lake.

Hot Lake Story.”

Roth said the two 38-gallon tanks Hot Lake’s fire truck had were no match for the large fire, for they were drained early in the course of the fire.

Today, Hot Lake’s old fire truck, which Roth drove in parades in the 1960s, is on display at the Eastern Oregon Fire Museum, La Grande. The fire engine, while at Hot Lake, was kept in a building also used as a pump house and a machine shop. The brick building still stands.

Roth, who has authored four books about Hot Lake’s past, said doing historical research about this area is a pursuit he will never tire of.

“I enjoy finding facts and separating truth from mythology,” he said. “Truth is always more interesting than fiction or fabrication.”

■ Dick Mason is a reporter with The Observer primarily covering the communities of North Powder, Imbler, Island City and Union, education, Union County veterans programs and local history.

# GOP

Continued from Page A1

recently that showed her in a neck-and-neck race with Kotek.

About 32% of the respondents were Republicans and 39% were Democrats — slightly lower than the parties’ vote share in the most recent midterm election, when Democrats made up 41% of the electorate and Republicans 33%. Nonaffiliated voters, the largest group in the state, have lower voting rates than those who choose a party, and they turn out at even lower rates in non-presidential elections.

Cygnal has a B+ rating from FiveThirtyEight, a highly respected political website, which reports that the firm more frequently overestimates Democrats than Republicans.

Democrats have controlled both chambers of the Legislature since 2007, except for a two-year period beginning in 2011 when the House was split 30-30. This year, Democrats hold 37 of 60 seats in the House and 18 of 30 in the Senate.

## ‘Playing a rigged game’

Dru Draper, political director for the House Republicans’ Evergreen Oregon PAC, said almost 20 House districts are in play for Republicans in November. That includes

former Democratic strongholds in Salem, Clackamas County and Hood River.

“The number of seats that we’re looking at is a lot bigger than it normally is because of how badly things are going,” he said.

That’s despite structural advantages Democrats had going into the election because of their control over redistricting, he said. “We’re kind of playing a rigged game because of what the Democrats did during redistricting, but a pissed-off electorate isn’t gonna let that get in the way,” Draper said.

House Majority Leader Julie Fahey, D-Eugene, and Dan Torres, the director of the Democratic Caucus’s FuturePAC, were in meetings throughout the day Thursday, July 7, and unavailable for interviews. Democratic candidates are running in 55 of the 60 House districts, and Fahey has previously praised this year’s slate of Democratic candidates for their enthusiasm and diversity.

Republicans start from a stronger position in the Senate, where only 16 seats are on the ballot in the fall: 15 for four-year terms and one to finish the last two years of a term. Five of the senators who don’t have to run for reelection this year are Democrats, while eight are Republicans and one is an independent who previously ran as a Republican. That means Repub-

licans need to win only seven races in November to tie the Senate and eight to win a majority. Knopp, the minority leader, said Republicans’ path to a majority runs through districts in Salem, Keizer, Medford, Hood River, Clackamas County and Lane County.

They’re defending three Republican-held seats in close districts now represented by Sens. Chuck Thomsen, R-Hood River; Bill Kennemer, R-Oregon City; and Kim Thatcher, R-Keizer. Kennemer and Thatcher are running for reelection against Democratic Gladstone Rep. Mark Meek and Keizer attorney Rich Walsh. Thomsen retires at the end of this year, and Rep. Daniel Bonham, R-The Dalles, is running in his stead.

Republicans also have their eyes on the Salem-based 10th Senate District now represented by Democratic Sen. Deb Patterson. Rep. Raquel Moore-Green, R-Salem, is running against her.

Republicans also are competing in the 16th Senate District on the north coast, previously represented by unaffiliated gubernatorial candidate Betsy Johnson. Rep. Suzanne Weber, R-Tillamook, is running against Melissa Busch, a nurse from Warren.

And Republicans hope Rep. Cedric Hayden,

R-Roseburg, can pick up an open Senate seat in rural Lane County east of Eugene and that Medford Mayor Randy Sparacino can unseat Sen. Jeff Golden, D-Ashland.

Oliver Muggli, executive director of the Senate Democratic Leadership Fund, said Democrats are pre-

pared for a tough November election because the party that controls the White House usually struggles in midterm elections.

But he said Senate Democrats have the most qualified slate of candidates they’ve had in years. Along with defending current Democratic districts, they

hope to unseat Thatcher and Kennemer.

“Many of them have a real track record of success winning tough districts and are not shying away from getting out and talking to voters and putting in the legwork all the way through to win tough campaigns,” Muggli said.

**Charles & Eileen Stewart**

10304 A 1st St.  
Island City, OR

cstewartpc@gmail.com

**541.910.5435**

U-HAUL AUTHORIZED DEALER

**OLD HICKORY**  
— BUILDINGS & SHEDS —

Authorized Dealer

Pay cash or Rent to own

mowers | small engines | chainsaws | garden tillers | trimmers | trailers | utvs

**Meeting YOUR OUTDOOR POWER NEEDS**

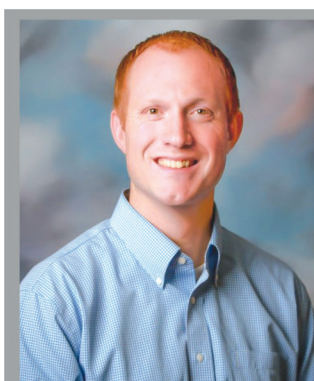
**Summer is Here!**

**IT'S TIME TO START Your Mowers**

**INLAND**  
Turf & Equipment

10303 W. 1st St. La Grande, OR

**541.963.4985**  
WWW.INLANDTURF.NET



**Turning 65?**  
We're here to help!

Joel Myer  
jmyer@valleyinsurance.com



1603 Washington Ave, La Grande  
(541) 963-3121

Let us take the **mystery** out of Medicare for you!

Kathy Rienti  
krienti@valleyinsurance.com

