

SCHOOL

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Lance Dixon.

“It will be used for professional development,” Dixon said.

The money will go toward helping staff members who want to become teachers pay for the college credits they need and compensating mentors assisting new teachers. Dixon noted that new teachers often have many questions about how to do things but may be reluctant to ask them because they don’t want to bother their colleagues. Dixon said that when a teacher who is paid extra to also be a mentor is available, new educators will feel more comfortable going to such a teacher for advice.

The North Powder superintendent said he would not want the HB 4030 funding to be spent on things like signing bonuses for new teachers or other recruiting incentives. He said this would not be fair to educators who have worked at the school district for many years.

The Cove School District will also be using the state funding to boost retention — with a twist. Two elliptical exercise machines for staff members will be purchased with some of the money.



Dick Mason/The Observer, File

Cove School District teacher Erich Dressen helps Angel Shields-Marrs with a project on March 10, 2020. The Cove School District in 2022 plans to use funding from House Bill 4030 to boost retention of its staff, including purchasing a pair of elliptical exercise machines for staff members to use and paying for teachers’ tuition for college courses needed to earn endorsements that will qualify them to teach a wider range of subjects, according to the district’s superintendent, Earl Pettit.

The exercise machines are meant to provide the opportunity for staff members who want to work out on such devices but may not be able to get into La Grande enough to use them in its exercise gyms, said Cove Superintendent Earl Pettit.

The HB 4030 funding will also be used to help Cove staff members pay tuition for college courses needed to earn endorsements that will qualify

them to teach a wider range of subjects, Pettit said.

The Imbler School District will be receiving \$48,000 in HB 4030 funds, and first-year Superintendent Randy Waite said the money will be used to help maintain its strong retention rate. He said his school district is fortunate to have a staff filled with members who want to stay.

“We are lucky in this way,” Waite said.

FIRE

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both sides of the Grande Ronde River and blanketed the county with smoke, although no lives were lost.

Weseman said at its peak, approximately 1,100 personnel were involved in fighting the Elbow Creek Fire, “which included a variety of resources such as overhead assigned to the incident management team, ground support and firefighters.”

An incident command site was at the Wallowa schools, where fire officials met to plan their assault on the wildfire and firefighters camped in tents on the school grounds.

Weseman placed the final cost to suppress the fire at \$22.8 million.

Origin

The big questions are still about the fire’s origin.

“The goal is to answer the five W’s (who, what, where, when, why and how),” Weseman said. “The order changes in fire investigation to when, where (origin), how (cause), why (is there intent or maliciousness), who (subjects or suspects)”

As for its origin, at the time of the fire it was speculated that it could have been caused by a hot spot remaining from lightning strikes a week earlier or

from rafters camping along the Grande Ronde River. But that remains under investigation.

She said there is no estimated timeline for completing the investigation.

“Fire investigation entails determining the origin area, protecting and collecting evidence, photo documentation, acquiring witness statements and more to determine the possible cause(s) of a fire,” Weseman said. “The primary goals in wildland fire investigations are to preserve the scene, determine the origin, determine the cause, determine potential responsible parties, protect evidence and to preserve the interests of all parties as far as possible. Every wildland fire investigation is unique. Timeliness of completion of an investigation (depends) on a variety of factors such as location, accessibility, evidence analysis and resources available.”

There also is a level of confidentiality investigators maintain during an active investigation “to not jeopardize the outcome,” she said.

Nature or humans?

That doesn’t appear to be so necessary when a fire is obviously lightning caused. The recent Marr Creek Fire, which burned 10 acres east of Joseph earlier this month, was quickly attributed to lightning.

Last year’s Bootleg Fire in Southern Oregon,

spurred by months of drought and a blistering heat wave in June 2021, was the largest wildfire of the year, burning more than 340,000 acres — or 530 square miles — of forest and grasslands by the time Elbow Creek got going, according to The New York Times.

The U.S. Forest Service often uses back-burning to suppress fires, which increases the area of acreage burned, OSU Extension said.

Other possible reasons for an increase in total acreage burned include:

- An increase in the number of fires caused by humans.
 - A history of fire suppression that has led to an increase in the amount of fuels that are connected across the landscape.
 - A warmer and drier climate that is causing available dead fuels to dry out earlier in the year.
 - A warmer and drier climate that reduces the moisture content of live vegetation. This increases plants’ potential to combust and adds to the available fuels on the landscape.
- While many wildfires are started by lightning, the vast majority are believed to be human-caused. Fires can result when people leave campfires unattended, negligently discard cigarettes or commit intentional acts of arson.

GOSS

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one-stop-shop capabilities. “We intend for that to stay the same.”

Since the business took root in Union County 100 years ago, Goss Motors has remained a family endeavor. And it has no plans of stopping.

A solid foundation

Milo Jasper Goss III, the company’s founder, was born on Jan. 7, 1888, in Prairieville, Michigan. In his late teens, he moved to Fruitland, Idaho, to work as a farm laborer. By January 1917, Goss had arrived in La Grande and found work as a clerk for a La Grande grocer named C. L. Thorne. He met his future wife, Ada Frances Colt, and the couple married in 1918.

Goss began working for auto garages in La Grande. During his employment at Inland Motor Co. between 1920 and 1921, he became so successful at selling Studebakers that he earned the name “Studebaker Goss.”

Goss bought out the Studebaker agency in La Grande around December 1922. He established M.J. Goss Motor Co. at 1115 Washington Ave., and The Observer printed announcements of the takeover in February 1923 — titled “Auto Agency Changes Hands.”

The couple had four children in the 1920s — Milodene, Milo Jasper “Bill” Jr., Robert Dale “Bob” and Kenton “Ken.” As the Goss family grew, so did the business.

In 1923, Goss relocated the business to the corner of Fir Street and Adams Avenue. He soon branched out from selling Studebakers, adding Plymouths, Oldsmobiles and DeSotos to the inventory. Unable to staff the garage during World War I, Goss briefly closed the business.

Upon reopening, the dealership moved in 1932 to its present location at 1415 Adams Ave. Bill and Bob served in World War II. After the war, all three sons became partners in the family business.

Bill married Donna Knight after returning from the war. The couple had four children — Garnet, Mark, Susie and Milo. In the 1940s, the dealership began selling Chevrolets. A decade later, they finally phased out the Studebaker.

Bill and Ken would continue to work at Goss Motors throughout their lives; Bob later moved on to another local dealership, Gateway Motors. Their father passed away in Portland in May 1963 and was buried in Union County’s Summerville Cemetery.

Outside of his role as “Studebaker Goss,” the elder Goss also left his philanthropic mark on La Grande. He was one of the early contributors to the Grande Ronde Symphony Orchestra after its formation in 1951.

“He was really an involved, invested community member in La Grande,” said Mary Groupe,



Classic cars drive through the intersection of Adams Avenue and Greenwood Street on Saturday, July 16, 2022. M.J. Goss Motors held its centennial anniversary celebration on the same day as the annual La Grande Classic Car Show.

Shannon Golden/The Observer

one of Goss’ grandchildren.

Over decades of steady sales, the company now has 32 employees and property on both sides of Adams Avenue. Around 2002, Dolven’s Appliances Inc., which was housed in the building across the street, went out of business. Goss Motors purchased the building, expanding its offices, showrooms and service spaces.

The company’s inventory today includes Chevrolet, GMC, Cadillac, Buick and Pontiac products. According to McAndie, M.J. Goss’ great-granddaughter who is the company’s electric car representative, Goss Motors will begin to introduce more electric vehicles in the coming years.

All in the family

For many of the Goss family members, the anniversary is more than just a milestone for the company’s sweeping history. It’s also an opportunity to walk down memory lane.

Goss Motors acted as a second home for a slew of children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren. Mark Goss, the current owner and general manager, began pushing brooms at the business before he turned 8 years old. Garnet, his sister, recalled the time she spent as a child at Goss Motors, when her father would bring her and her siblings to the garage.

“It was my dad’s job to babysit us and keep us out of trouble on Sundays,” she said.

Garnet and her siblings took turns raising each other up on the garage’s rotary lifts. She also remembers the dealership’s old Coke machine, and the occasional search to see if mice had gotten into the empty bottles.

Mary Groupe, Milodene Goss’ daughter and one of Mark’s cousins, said some of her earliest memories growing up revolved around the new car unveilings in the Goss showroom. In antici-

tion of the yearly September event, the business would cover its windows, shielding the new models from eager onlookers on the main drag in downtown La Grande.

According to Mary, when the day rolled around, everyone flocked to the dealership.

“It was such a big deal,” she said. “I was so proud he was my grandfather.”

She remembered the spectacle of these events, from the elegant 1950s fashion of the women in attendance to the spread of tea, coffee, apple cider and doughnuts set out for patrons. Attendees were given what she called “party favors” — accorded rain bonnets that came in little plastic cases.

Even for the younger generations who only spent snippets of their childhood in La Grande, the familiar smell of the dealership is enough to bring memories rushing back.

“Coming to La Grande is like coming home,” said Hayley Pratt, a fourth-generation descendant. “It always will be, and I haven’t lived here since I was a baby.”

The newest family member — 5-month-old Remi, daughter of Tayde McAndie and her husband, Kyle — is already chalking up hours at the dealership. According to Tayde, Remi has met the staff and already seems familiar with the environment.

“I hope she has great memories here as a kid,” Tayde said. “Like we did.”

Passing the torch

After attaining a business administration degree in Michigan, Mark started managing the business in his 20s, although his father remained active in the business until his passing in 2006. He



Goss Motors/Contributed Photo
M.J. Goss III, founder of M.J. Goss Motor Company, opened the motor shop in 1922 and began selling Studebakers like the one pictured in this photo.

eventually bought out his uncle’s share of the company and continued to expand Goss Motors into what it is today.

Mark has been a Chevrolet dealer for 25 years, and currently co-owns the company with Mark Sherman. He noted that the car industry has grown away from what it used to be.

“It’s just become corporate America,” he said, noting that the company is now franchised through General Motors. “You’re just a number out here.”

Despite this shift, the company remains grounded in its community focus. They’ve worked to bolster their online presence and connect with customers via social media. They also recently became a participating dealer with Warranty Forever, a maintenance-based coverage program.

According to Mark Goss, the company has had opportunities to move from Adams Avenue to a perhaps more profitable location. For him, the decision to stay in downtown La Grande prioritized community over the business.

“If we weren’t downtown, what would downtown La Grande have?” he said.

With more than four decades of co-ownership under his belt, Mark has his sights set on retirement — eager for more time to golf. He plans to shift to part-

time within the next year, and is starting to show his daughter, McAndie, and her husband, Kyle, the ropes.

Moving forward

From a childhood full of memories at the dealership to countless hours spent working in the service department during college, McAndie is now the business development and marketing manager for the company.

“There’s just so much history in this building. I’m probably too attached to it,” Tayde said with a smile.

She used to love sitting in the showroom cars with her siblings, Mavric and Caylin.

“We weren’t allowed to honk the horns, but we played in them and loved to see all the new rigs,” she said.

On career day in elementary school, Tayde chose to shadow her father, fascinated by the ins and outs of the body shop, the service department and the company’s old computer database. When her mom came to pick her up, she elected to stay with her father until the end of his workday.

Now, Tayde and Kyle are poised to pick up the family business, although neither of them expected a career in car sales.

Kyle, who initially went to school to be a firefighter paramedic, began working at the company in 2010. Tayde, who graduated with a bachelor’s degree in music, has been at the business full-time since 2014. As employees themselves, they know well the dynamics of a family business.

“I wouldn’t work in the car business other than here,” Kyle said, noting the company’s down-to-earth approach to customer service.

Kyle bought his first car, a white 1985 Chevy blazer, from Mark years before he met his daughter. Now as the couple navigates their roles as new parents, Kyle will work closely with Mark to learn how to run the company.

“It’s nerve-wracking,” he said, “but exciting too. There’s a lot of responsibility.”

Tayde said she never felt pressured to step into owning the business. She just wants to fill the role as best she can.

“That means that I do well for the business, I do well for the employees, for our customers and the community,” she said.

Tayde is unsure who will step into the role after her and Kyle, but she hopes to pass it on in a stable condition, with its legacy intact.

With the unique nature of the business’ upcoming fourth-generation ownership, some in the family may be eager to see Remi carry on the family business. But for Tayde, it’s one step at a time.

“I want her to follow her dreams,” she said. “Whatever those are, whether that’s here or elsewhere, I want her to be able to decide that for herself.”