## AUTISM

Continued from Page A1

"Everyone can relate in some way or another."

This year's walk received two \$2,500 donations from what the ASO calls "platinum sponsors" — La Grande's Center for Human Development and The Dalles-based nonprofit Greater Oregon Behavioral Health. Other sponsors chipped in as well, including La Grande's own Bowman Trucking.

Smith and co-organizer JulieKay Dudley started the Union County Color the Blues for Autism Walk in 2016. According to Smith and Dudley, the event has outgrown its original locale at Riverside Park, and will now be held at the Union County Fairgrounds, 3604 N. Second St.

Smith said the fairgrounds offer a space that is big enough and safe enough for more people to come and enjoy the festivities. Despite the location change, Smith expects to see returning volunteers and participants who have a soft spot for the yearly event.

"This is the walk that they look forward to being a part of every year," she said. "It feels pretty good to have that response."

For Smith, the autism walk – and her role in planning it - hits close to home. Her son, Raiden, was diagnosed with autism at two years old. Raiden endured all manner of challenges, from being born prematurely to persevering through a broken collar bone while working through a developmental delay.

"He's our success story," Smith said. "He's my superhero."

Despite his developmental delay, he began formulating words and sentences around four years old with the help of some of his favorite songs



Join us for a family-friendly, Autism ALL FUNDS RAISED ARE TO SUPPORT ASO'S friendly community event celebrating the PROGRAMS in EASTERN OREGON! people we love on the autism spectrum!

Registration Fees: Adults (ages 18+): \$10 Children (ages 3-17): \$5 Ages 2 and under: FREE, but no t-shirt stration website: Registration fee includes: Raffles, Crafts, Lunch, Ice Cream Sandwiches, Shaved Ice, Cosplay Characters, Facepaining, Resource Tables, DJ, and an Autism Walk with COLOR! The walk is a 1/2 mile loop designed t giv.com/event/colortheblues2022

Questions? Contact: Cassiopaia Smith Region 1 Representative Autism Society of Oregon Phone: 541.910.1328 assiopaiaS@autismsociety

### Cassiopaia Smith/Contributed Photo The annual Color the Blues for Autism Walk will take place Saturday August 13th, from 10 am to 1 pm.

and television shows. Now 12, Smith's son joins her for the yearly walks.

County Fairg

sible by all.

3604 N. 2nd Street La Grande, OR 97850

This year, Smith has invited the Portland Ghostbusters — a donation-based charity cosplay group that participates and volunteers in community events throughout the Pacific Northwest - to the walk. A few of the group's volunteers will be in attendance, dressed in full Ghostbusters get-up.

Attendees can also expect a free lunch, a photo booth, face painting, prize raffles and more. Local vendors like La Grande's Kettle Corn N' More will also be selling a variety of treats. This year's festivities will also include a bounce house.

Dudley, whose daughter is on the spectrum, has been involved in the autism community for over 35 years. For her, the day is just as important for celebrating children on the

spectrum as it is for parents and family.

'I never realized until we started this how much families need a day to just be a family," Dudley said. "For parents, it's a day to relax and let your hair down.'

For siblings who often feel left out because of the energy parents put into caring for their child with autism, Dudley said the color walk can help them understand "that their sibling is someone to celebrate."

The culminating activity of the day will be the color walk. Smith and Dudley have ordered bulk batches of dyed cornstarch that participants can throw as they parade around the halfmile paved loop on the fairgrounds. Dudley's advice to event-goers: "Wear something that you don't mind getting colors on."

With the help of the Union County Chamber of Commerce, Smith hopes to garner more volunteers and community members who want to attend. Smith said she anticipates 250 attendees this year, but would be thrilled if more show up.

Cassiopaia Smith/Contributed Photo

During the first annual Color the Blues Autism Walk on

April 30, 2016, Cassiopaia Smith was joined by her husband,

Jeremy, and her son, Raiden, who designed the T-shirts that

participants wore during the walk.

"There's so much craziness in the world today," she said. "We just want to let everyone know that we all can come together."

Funds from event registration fees will go toward supporting ASO-sponsored programs, events and support groups in Eastern Oregon. Registration is \$10 for adults over 18 and \$5 for children between three and 17. Admission is free for children two and under. Participants over the age of two receive T-shirts with their registration.

Register at https:// secure.qgiv.com/event/ colortheblues2022/.

Sign up to volunteer at volunteersignup.org/LE994.

> the road, Hamilton said he slowed down and turned on his brights - trying to get law enforcement to pull him over. Lee noticed and told him if he slowed down again he would shoot.

> Along Highway 237, Hamilton said Lee rolled down the passenger window and tossed the gun. He was momentarily relieved until Lee pulled another gun. McDaniel asked if this was the same gun from Meacham and Hamilton responded he did not know at the time, but later made

### **MERA**

Continued from Page A1

The forest management project at MERA was introduced by Union County for improving forest health and reducing wildfire risk, as well as conducting logging for profit, with the proceeds going back into the recreation area.

The Red Apple area and the MERA Loop trail below Asher Lane will be closed off for logging and mastication from Aug. 29 through Oct. 31. All fire safety restrictions as outlined by the Oregon Department of Forestry will be followed while logging, according to Wright.

Wright plans to have weekly conversations with the contractor and go onsite to the logging area in order to provide greater oversight and ensure the project is moving along as intended.

"Make sure it's a good job when we are all said and done," he said.

There was some debate over whether the Upper Igo Trailhead should remain open during the logging work after residents from Igo Lane expressed safety concerns about equestrians on the road due to blind corners. The joint advisory committee unanimously voted to keep all the trailheads open.

The boundary line will be heavily signed so the public is aware of what areas are off limits. Committee members and volunteers will be stationed at MERA on the first day of logging to answer questions and direct people to areas where they can still hike, bike, ride and enjoy the outdoors.

Wright announced that an agreement had been reached with a private landowner to allow the logging company access to MERA, so that the primary parking lot for MERA was not impacted.

Wright also provided a brief update on the hiring of a new coordinator for Union County Parks. He hopes to have the position filled by November.

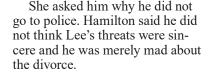
"After the last meeting, I appreciate you working to address our concerns," said Tyler Brooks, committee member and head of the Blue Mountain Single Track Club.

# TRIAL

Continued from Page A1

While driving, Hamilton said he engaged in small talk, pointing out where his wife's children lived - a decision he would come to regret.

The second trip was supposed to be to Spring Creek, where Lee told Hamilton an RV had broken down. But when the pair were almost to the exit, Lee revealed he actually needed to go to Meacham, where he met a man with a brightly ored plastic shopping bag. During the drive back, Hamilton said, Lee asked if he wanted to see what was in the bag. Hamilton said Lee pulled out a box, opened it and revealed a gun. Earlier during his testimony, Hamilton said he has an intense fear of guns.



### The night of Williams' slaying

Hamilton was supposed to meet Lee and his son at the repair shop the night Williams was killed, Nov. 17, 2018.

Hamilton said he was feeling incredibly anxious that night worrying that perhaps it was not Lee's son coming from Portland but someone else. Hamilton ended up going to Lee's shop after 11 p.m. He said he took back roads to avoid cameras, not wanting any association between himself and Lee in case something did happen that night. When he arrived, Lee came out from his trailer and the pair had a brief interaction where Hamilton demanded his keys because the work on his RV was still not completed. Hamilton said Lee went back inside to get the keys, but when he came back he was wearing different clothes and was carrying a bag. According to Hamilton, Lee opened the passenger door, tossed the bag down and got in the car. Hamilton testified Lee grabbed a long-barreled gun and pressed it to Hamilton's temple. Hamilton told jurors he was scared and thought Lee was going to kill him.

was desperately trying to think of a way out. He said he considered trying to knock the gun out of Lee's hand, but was worried the gun would go off while it was pressed against his head.

Hamilton said as they approached the Conley Road house, Lee had him slow down and partially turn around until the car was straight across the road. Hamilton said Lee was acting erratically — half screaming, half mumbling. He could not recall if he or Lee had shut off the car, just that the keys ended up on the passenger seat after Lee got out. Hamilton said Lee kept the gun pointed at him as he went around and opened all of the car doors. McDaniel asked Hamilton why he did not drive away at this point. He answered Lee had told him not to move or he would shoot. Hamilton said he heard gunshots - two incredibly loud shots and then possibly two or three quieter shots. He told McDaniel he thought maybe there was a gunfight happening. Other than the shots, he heard nothing.

still was worried and terrified to be testifying.

### **Defense's cross examination**

Lee's attorney, Dean Gushwa, on cross examination asked Hamilton multiple times if he heard anything the night of Williams' slaying. Hamilton said the only sounds he heard that night were the gunshots.

Gushwa turned to Hamilton's agreement with the district attorney in exchange for his testimony. Hamilton said he pleaded guilty to two charges of hindering, which came with 71/2 years of prison time. Hamilton said he believed this was all he would be charged with, but the murder charge had not been dismissed. Gushwa asked Hamilton why he had changed his mind and finally testified about the murder. Hamilton said he wanted to put Williams' family, and his own family, at ease. Gushwa noted instances when Hamilton lied to police and asked Hamilton whether he told the truth in his final interview with police. When Gushwa continued his cross examination Monday morning, Aug. 1, he asked Hamilton if he and Lee were intimate together. Hamilton said he did not know what Gushwa meant, to which the defense clarified a sexual relationship.

#### **Testimony about** Lee's demeanor

Hamilton testified he became uncomfortable with Lee's language and attitude, which escalated once the Conley Road property was listed for sale.

He told the jury Lee would say his wife was costing him everything, that she needed to be gotten rid of and he knew people in Portland that for \$3,000 would come to deal with the problem.

Hamilton said Lee asked him if he would serve as an alibi if something happened. Hamilton said he would not lie to police.

McDaniel asked why Hamilton continued to work with Lee. He explained they were so close to being done with the trailer and it felt like the end was in sight.

During this line of questioning from McDaniel, Hamilton broke down crying again and needed time to compose himself.

When he continued, he said as Lee directed him to drive, he

He said Lee returned, closing all the car doors.

Hamilton said he asked Lee if someone was shooting at them. He said Lee told him to shut up and drive.

Hamilton testified Lee also said "she" would no longer be bothering him, but did not clarify whom he was speaking about.

Hamilton said Lee was breathing heavily, seemed mad and did not want to talk. He said Lee held the gun to Hamilton's head again as they started to drive. As they passed police on

the connection.

Hamilton said after they arrived at the shop, Lee got out while keeping the gun trained on him and said, "Don't tell anyone or we'll kill you, Cindy, the family, just like we killed her."

Hamilton said he started begging for his life, reassuring Lee he would not say anything. He said he was too scared to go home, so instead he went to his office.

McDaniel again asked Hamilton why he did not go to the police. Hamilton said he was scared and his family came first.

Hamilton told the jury that Lee called him two times after that night. The first time Lee asked him what was going on and Hamilton assured him that he had not talked to anyone. The second call, which went to voicemail, was Lee telling Hamilton the RV was ready.

When Hamilton was arrested in connection to Williams' death, he said he tried to deflect their questions and not say exactly what happened that night. Hamilton said he believed Lee's threats to kill his family, and he

Hamilton said no.

The district attorney rested her case on Aug. 2, and Gushwa scheduled defense witnesses for Aug. 3. The court anticipates closing statements could happen Aug. 3, after which it will be up to the jury to determine a verdict.

