

WILDHORSE

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George said. He said there was already an Epson Tour Security Preparedness plan in place for the tournament to mitigate any potential threats. Wildhorse's security, the tribal police and emergency medical services will be onsite for the entire week of the tournament

Driving the economy and international media exposure

There are 132 contestants competing in the Epson Tour during the stop in Umatilla County.

Each contestant is supported by an entourage of three to five individuals, which means the tournament will bring upward of 600 people to the Pendleton area just with players, staff support and family members.

George also believes locals will attend, and people from the surrounding area will make the day trip or weekend trip to enjoy the tournament.

The economic boost will not be limited to Wildhorse Resort & Casino, but will spill over to local business, George said. Tournament organizers put together a fact sheet for players listing hotels, restaurants and other stores.

"We think the economic benefits from it will be reaped by and enjoyed by the local economy," George said of the tournament.

"Our hotel doesn't have enough rooms for everyone, so they are going to have to stay at local hotels. They are going to have to eat somewhere. They are going to have to get their gas and other products that they need for the tournament. So we think that it's going to have a huge economic impact."

The tournament will also bring national and international media exposure to Pendleton. The tour is already generating attention from news outlets in Portland, Boise and Washington's Tri-Cities, according to George. The professionals that make up the Epson Tour represent around 32 different countries, which also means there will be international coverage.

"It won't be on the scale of an official LPGA event, but it's the next best thing to it," he said.

Growing the game of golf

Wildhorse is hosting two youth golf clinics as part of the tournament events. The first is being held at Birch Creek Golf Course on Aug. 29 and is open to the general public.

Members of the Epson Tour and Nike are helping run the camp.

The following day there will be a Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation youth clinic at Wildhorse Golf Course, which is sponsored by N7 — the Native American division of Nike. The clinic will be hosted by Gabby Lemieux — a member of the Shoshone-Paiute Tribe of Duck Valley Indian Reservation and an N7 ambassador. She helped Vallivue High School in Caldwell, Idaho, win a state title in 2014 and played golf at the collegiate level for Texas Tech University, where she earned Big 12 Conference Player of the Year honors in 2016 and the No. 1 ranking in the country.

Following the youth clinics early in the week, there will be Pro-Am tournaments on Aug. 31 and Sept. 1.

MORE INFORMATION

The Wildhorse Ladies Classic, an Epson Tour event, is set for Sept. 2-4, 2022. Find full details — tickets, clinics and volunteer opportunities — at www.wildhorseresort.com/2022-epson-tour-page.

"We brought (the Epson Tour) here with the idea that these are younger professionals, young ladies, who are aspiring to move onto something greater, to become a member of the LPGA. We hope that people can see that. I know that when you play with one of the professionals, you're just in awe and inspired by what they've been able to accomplish," George said. "We hope that some of those traits and qualities are observed by our youth from the region."

Another goal of the tournament is to provide more exposure to the world of golf to young women. George said that a lot of the time women's sports do not get the level of recognition they deserve, but that has slowly been changing. There has been a rising interest in women's sports and recognition of female athletes.

"Golf can be played by both men and women, and we want to grow the game of golf," George said. "To grow the game of golf is to have more exposure to golf and what you could do with golf as a young lady."

Hub of entertainment

Wildhorse Resort & Casino hosts a number of events from concerts to comedy shows throughout the year.

According to George, they aim to bring in a diverse group of performers to cater to a wide variety of audiences from Pendleton and the surrounding area.

"We at Wildhorse like to think that we're the hub of entertainment around here," he said.

Whether Wildhorse will host other professional sporting events and tournaments of similar standing depends on the price point. George said that the Epson Tour — which costs \$200,000 to host — was a price Wildhorse could afford. The resort and casino is partnering with 47 sponsors at both the local and national level to help offset the cost, George said, adding sponsors were also how Wildhorse was able to keep the cost of attendance low — with a day pass costing \$5 and a week pass \$20.

"There's a lot of possibilities out there, so I don't want to discount any of them. We bring in a lot of events now, and especially bringing in the Epson Tour helps bring us to another level," he said. "So now, we hope we might become a host site for USGA national events, like the amateur women's and amateur junior boys and girls."

There are plans to build a new hotel tower — the current building was built in 1996 — which would add 214 rooms and a larger multi-purpose event space. George said WRC would like to build the event space on hydraulic risers, which would allow for the area to be configured in different ways for each event.

The possibilities are endless — the room could be flat for a conference, raised into stadium seating for boxing or tiered for a play. He believes an event space of this caliber would help to differentiate Wildhorse as a venue.

"It will be an exciting venue in Eastern Oregon," he said.



Shannon Golden/The Observer

Trevor Winder on Friday, Aug. 19, 2022, joins young actors on stage during a rehearsal for the Elgin Opera House's production of "School of Rock." With a new grant from the Oregon Cultural Trust the Opera House has big plans for its upcoming performances.

GRANT

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"That's kind of a precarious way to run an organization," Bonney admitted, noting that show-by-show funding makes it hard to build a sustainable program.

With the help of Rep. Bobby Levy and her team, Hale and Bonney began working with the Oregon Cultural Trust Foundation and the Oregon Arts Commission to explore grant opportunities for the theater's programs.

The pair applied for the Cultural Development Grant in the spring of this year, and learned that

they received the award in August.

The Cultural Trust awarded \$3,422,748 in grants this year to 138 arts, heritage and humanities organizations across the state. More than \$1.7 million of this money funds Cultural Development Grants like the one Friends of the Opera House was awarded. The organization is one of 11 in the state receiving its first-ever Cultural Trust award.

Within the grant guidelines, the Cultural Trust emphasizes that funding must support "the development of artists, cultural experts, or scholars who promote culture as a core part of vibrant communi-

ties." According to Bonney, the Opera House provides cultural enrichment not just for the Union County community, but the greater Eastern Oregon region.

"Our mission is to provide quality theatrical, voice and choreography education to our general public and provide a safe and nonjudgmental environment for any and all," she said.

Bonney noted that, based on ticket sales, almost two-thirds of the Opera House's audience comes from outside of Union County. She also emphasized that the venue garners a regional draw for its youth camps and programs. During this year's

summer camp, almost 100 kids from around the region attended.

"It's really important to us to be able to offer this to kids," said Bonney. "Some kids that might not fit in in a normal academic structure find their home here."

But Bonney said that grant funding is just part of how the Opera House aims to bolster its educational and theatrical programs each year. She noted that the Friends of the Opera House receive tax-deductible donations from 75 to 100 participating members each year.

"We wanted to be able to hire additional resources to help our kids be their very best," Bonney said.

FUNDING

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Based on the work session, the top priority projects that would receive funding are road work on 16th Street, land acquisition for a new police station, an east-side housing water and sewer infrastructure project, purchasing a wildland fire engine and road work on 12th Street. Road work on N Avenue would also be partially funded.

"The city council is very interested in engaging the public to share details about the projects under consideration and hear from the citizens of La Grande before they finalize their decision," Strope said in a press release.

Comments and questions can be submitted in advance to Strope at rstrope@cityoflagrande.org before 5 p.m. on Sept. 9.



The Observer, File

Union County's law enforcement building, La Grande, shown on Tuesday, April 26, 2022, houses the La Grande Police Department, the Union County Sheriff's Office and the Union County Jail. The police department is hoping to acquire land for a new building with funding from the American Rescue Plan Act.

Counselors will also address comments and questions live during the town hall.

According to Strope, the comments feed on Facebook will be monitored and there will also be an email address shared during the meeting for people to submit inquiries. The virtual town hall

will be shown live on Charter Communications channel 180, on the La Grande Alive website and on the Eastern Oregon Alive.TV Facebook page.

After the meeting concludes, counselors will come to a consensus on project priority. This will be an agenda item for the October city council ses-

THE PROPOSED PROJECTS

Seventeen projects totaling more than \$7 million are vying for \$3 million available. Those projects are:

- Eleven separate street and road projects for 16th Street, 12th Street, N Avenue, Willow Street, Division Street, Walnut Street, Sixth Street, Monroe Avenue, Harrison Avenue, East L Avenue and Alder Street.
- An east-side housing water and infrastructure project to lay the groundwork for more than 200 new residential lots.
- Downtown revitalization plan implantation.
- Destination retail development to help strengthen La Grande businesses.
- Land acquisition for a new police station.
- Wildland fire engine to help fight wildfires.
- New recreation center.

sion. Public comments will also be open during the Oct. 5 meeting before the council votes.

Attention Union County 4th-12th graders!



GRH Children's Clinic

Call 541-663-3150

MONDAY 9-12-22

GRH Union Clinic

Call 541-562-6180

WEDNESDAY 9-21-22

GRH Elgin Clinic

Call 541-437-2273

FRIDAY 9-9-22

Three opportunities left this school year to make an appointment for a **FREE Sports Physical!**

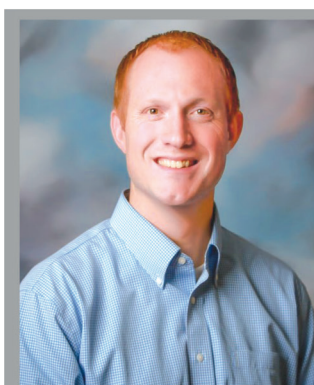
Check up before you suit up!

College students? Find out about sports physicals for the discounted fee of \$50! Call our Union or Elgin clinic today!



Find out more about all we do at grh.org

Grande Ronde Hospital & Clinics—an independent, 501(c)3 not-for-profit health system since 1907



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