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September 1, 2022

THURSDAY EDITION

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INSIDE

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Oregon officials respond to Bend shooting

State lawmaker says he plans to push for stronger gun control regulations during legislative session

By GARRETT ANDREWS AND ALEX BAUMHARDT
Oregon Capital Chronicle

SALEM — The mass shooting in Bend on Sunday, Aug. 28, drew a mixed response from Oregon’s U.S. congressional members, governor, state lawmakers and gubernatorial candidates, with calls for tighter gun controls and wider access to mental health care.

A state lawmaker, state Rep. Jason Kropf, D-Bend, told the Capital Chronicle he plans to pursue legislative action, starting with a review of Oregon’s gun control laws. Kropf chairs the House Judiciary Committee.

A 20-year-old totting an AR-15 style weapon sprayed bullets in a Safeway parking lot then inside the store, killing two people and wounding a third, police said. They found him dead at the scene with a self-inflicted gunshot wound.

Gov. Kate Brown said the victims shouldn’t have died.

“Every Oregonian should be able to go to a grocery store without the fear of gun violence,” Brown said in a statement. “The families of these victims will forever be impacted by these senseless acts.”

U.S. Rep. Cliff Bentz, a Republican who represents Eastern Oregon and part of Central Oregon in Congress, called the shooting “heartbreaking and tragic” in a tweet. “Please join Lindsay and I in praying for the victims and their families,” Bentz wrote.

The killings coincide with a push in Oregon for tighter gun regulations, with

MORE INFORMATION

Ray Shields was walking through the parking lot of the Safeway on Bend’s east side to buy a macaroni and cheese dinner when the rattle of gunfire filled his ears. The 62-year-old Bend resident, who walks with crutches due to his osteoarthritis, spun around and fled when a man nearby screamed: “live shooter.” **Page A8**

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DEBT RELIEF

Area high ed officials weigh in on student debt forgiveness

By ISABELLA CROWLEY and DAKOTA CASTETS-DIDIER
EO Media Group

LA GRANDE — President Joe Biden’s student loan forgiveness plan could make a difference for some Eastern Oregon residents.

According to Eastern Oregon University’s financial aid office, 93% of students receive some form of financial aid. This includes federal student loans, grants, work-study programs and scholarships.

“We’re still waiting for official guidance, but the opportunity is very exciting for our students and families with loan debt,” EOU scholarship coordinator Danny Bailey said.

According to Biden’s plan, borrowers who earn less than \$125,000 a year, or families earning less than \$250,000, will be eligible for \$10,000 of federal student debt forgiveness. Pell grants recipients — a federal grant for undergraduate students in exceptional financial need — are eligible for \$20,000 of debt forgiveness. Eligibility will be based on adjusted gross income. Loans obtained after June 30, 2022, will not be eligible for relief.

For Umatilla County, the yearly per-person income is \$25,452 and the median household income is \$57,973, according to 2020 U.S. Census Bureau data. In Union County, the yearly per-person income is \$27,748 and the median household income is \$53,940.

Data shows 65% of EOU students graduate with debt

Of the public four-year institutions in the state that shared data on student debt, Eastern had the highest percentage of students graduating with debt at 65% and the fourth highest average amount of debt at \$24,548 — behind Oregon State University, Oregon Institute of Technology and University of Oregon.

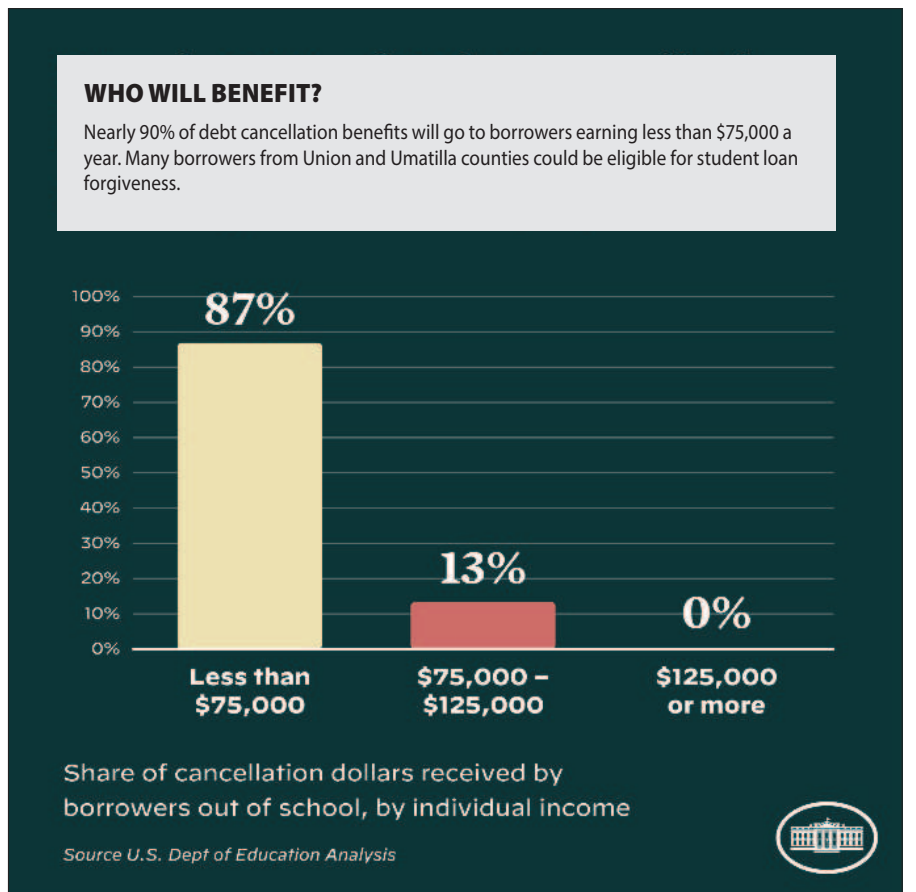
Only 4% of students graduated with private debt, averaging at \$10,505. This is less than the state trend — 8% and \$37,150 respectively.

After the first four weeks of the year, EOU puts together a fact



Dick Mason/The Observer, File

An April 2022 file photo shows the front entrance of Eastern Oregon University in La Grande. Data indicates 93% of students who attend Eastern Oregon University receive some form of financial aid. Borrowers could receive up to \$20,000 in debt cancellation under President Joe Biden’s new student debt forgiveness plan.



U.S. Department of Education/Contributed Graphic

sheet, which breaks down the demographic of the total enrollment, the incoming freshman and new transfers. The 2022 report will not be available until November, but according to the 2021 fact sheet 34% of total students enrolled and 48% of incoming freshmen were from Eastern Oregon.

Of the 2021 incoming freshman,

there were 34 students from La Grande High School, eight from Baker High School, six from Union High School, six each from Umatilla, Ontario and Imbler high schools, five each from Elgin and Hermiston high schools and four from Pendleton High School.

See, **Debt**/Page A3

No human bones found at Finley Creek Jane Doe site



Excavation work is done in August 2022 in the Finley Creek area by state forensic personnel in response to the shown by cadaver dogs brought in by a task force involving the unidentified remains of a woman found in 1978.

Investigation of case is expected to be ongoing

By DICK MASON
The Observer

ELGIN — The Finley Creek Jane Doe case, which has taken many twists and turns over the past four decades, has taken a pivot in the wrong direction, but investigators, including the Oregon State Police, are refusing to give up.

The Oregon State Police

recently led an excavation project at a site near Finley Creek, 18 miles north of La Grande, where the remains of an unidentified woman were found in August 1978.

The work was conducted Tuesday and Wednesday, Aug. 16-17, by the OSP Forensics Service Division, the State Medical Examiner’s Office Forensic Anthropologist, the OSP’s major crimes detectives and members of the Union County Search and Rescue team. The operation was in response to recent interest shown by cadaver dogs brought in by the Finley

Creek Jane Doe Task Force involving the unidentified remains of the woman found in 1978.

Union County Search and Rescue conducted a grid search of approximately three acres around the original burial site and the recent locations of interest by the cadaver dogs. Over 50 bones were located by the search and rescue team. The State Medical Examiner’s Forensic Anthropologist examined each of the bones and none of them were

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WEATHER Full forecast on the back of B section

Tonight 49 Low Clear

Friday 101/54 Very hot

HOT

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Issue 105
3 sections, 34 pages
La Grande, Oregon

Email story ideas to news@lagrandeobserver.com.
More contact info on Page A4.