



**TIGERS RALLY BACK**  
BOYS HOOPS/1B



**WEEKEND EDITION**  
**HOW MUCH SNOW?**  
LIFESTYLES/1C



**OFF TO THE SLED RACES**  
OUTSIDE/8C

# EAST OREGONIAN

JANUARY 14-15, 2017

141st Year, No. 65

WINNER OF THE 2016 ONPA GENERAL EXCELLENCE AWARD

\$1.50

## Plan to close mental hospital brings déjà vu



File photo by Brian Davies/The Register-Guard

Visitors to the Oregon State Hospital Junction City campus walk outside the facility during a public tour in Junction City in January 2015.

Pendleton hospital closed in 2014 so \$130M facility could be built in Junction City

By **KATHY ANEY**  
*East Oregonian*

When Gov. Kate Brown released her \$20.8 billion budget for the next biennium, one item on the chopping block shocked some eastside Oregonians.

There, on page 60, was something that caused jaws to drop — the proposed closure of the state mental health hospital in Junction City. To understand the consternation, one must go back to 2014. That year, Pendleton lost the

Blue Mountain Recovery Center, one of three state mental health facilities in the Oregon State Hospital system, shut down along with the Portland campus. In their place, a pristine \$130 million hospital opened in Junction City north of Eugene.

Now that facility, after only 19 months in operation, is slated for closure. The state will pay off the bonds used to build the hospital until 2039.

Retired Oregon representative Bob Jenson (R-Pendleton) and his wife,

Evelyn, shook their heads upon hearing of the possible closure. Both had fought hard for decades to retain the Pendleton hospital.

“It was on the chopping block back in 1984,” said Evelyn, former superintendent of the Pendleton hospital, which started as the Eastern Oregon State Hospital in 1948. “It was always offered up.”

When the state announced plans to close Pendleton and Portland hospitals and replace them with one in

Junction City, Evelyn said she felt dismayed. Instead of having three hospitals scattered around the state, there would be two within a short distance of one another.

“It didn’t make a lot of sense,” she said. “Those facilities need to serve the entire state, not just a concentrated area.”

Bob spent hours lobbying his fellow legislators each time the budget ax hovered. He said he and then-Sen.

See **MENTAL HEALTH/10A**

## Schools ponder how to make up snow days

*East Oregonian*

A rash of snow days at schools across Oregon has put them in the debt of the state.

The Oregon Department of Education requires all students meet a minimum number of instructional hours, a threshold some local school districts are struggling to hit as prolonged bouts of inclement weather have forced closures.

Now local school districts will have to decide whether they schedule make-up days or petition the state to waive the minimum instructional hour requirement for the 2016-2017 school year.

Pendleton has already missed six school days this year due to snow and Hermiston has missed five. Many other local districts have missed similar class time.

In Pendleton School District human resources director Brad Bixler said school officials still are considering all of their options, but a definitive plan has yet to take shape.

With the construction of Washington and Sherwood Heights elementary schools pushing the start of the K-5 back by three

See **SNOW DAYS/10A**



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

The Tollgate Store marks the halfway point between Weston and Elgin on Highway 204 and is the area’s only restaurant.

## LAST STOP

By **GEORGE PLAVEN**  
*East Oregonian*

Cecil Berry poked inside the Tollgate Store & Restaurant on a bluebird Friday morning, snow piled high after a barrage of recent storms, looking for someone to ride the freshly groomed snowmobile trails.

“I’m here every day at 9 a.m.,” said Berry, who lives in the small mountain community. “If there’s someone to go snowmobiling with, I talk them into it.”

Perched atop the Blue Mountains halfway between Weston and Elgin along Highway 204, Tollgate is a hub of year-round outdoor recreation. There is snowmobiling and skiing during winter, mushroom hunting in the spring, camping and lake fishing over summer

and big game hunting later in the fall.

For hunters, anglers and powder hounds alike, the Tollgate Store is the only place to meet and grab a bite to eat before heading out into the woods.

“This is the last resort on the mountain,” Berry said. “If it goes, there won’t even be anyplace to stop.”

After 10 years, store owner Jeff Pinsker said he is burned out and looking to sell the two-acre property, which includes the main store and restaurant, a two-bedroom home upstairs, shop next door and four rental units in the back. It is listed for sale by owner, with an asking price of \$450,000.

Pinsker, 50, moved to Tollgate from California after buying the store in 2006 with his business partner,

See **TOLLGATE/10A**

Remote Tollgate Store and Restaurant is the only place for food and services

## Eastern Oregon Forum takes aim at gun laws

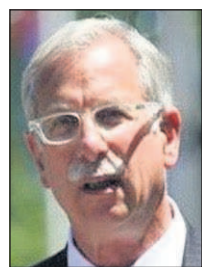
By **PHIL WRIGHT**  
*East Oregonian*

The 2017 Eastern Oregon Forum will open with a bang. “Gun Facts, Regulations, and the Second Amendment” opens the annual discussion series Tuesday at Blue Mountain Community College, Pendleton.

Navigating the fraught legal and political waters falls to three panelist: Stuart Roberts, long-serving Pendleton police chief; Lou Jaffe, board member of the nonprofit Gun Owners For Responsible Ownership;



Roberts



Jaffe



Broadfoot

and Jerod Broadfoot, former hunting lobbyist and co-founder of the Oregon Outdoor Council.

The numbers vary depending on the source, but between 270 and 310 million guns are in private

hands in the United States, giving the nation the highest rate of gun ownership in the world. The American Journal of Medicine in March 2016 published a study showing the firearm death rate in the United States was 10 times

higher than other industrialized nations.

Roberts said he would speak about firearm training for police, prevailing case law on police use of deadly force, and Oregon gun laws in general, such as for carrying and transporting guns. He said he believes there needs to be a certain amount of gun regulation and that someone qualified to carry a concealed weapon may not be qualified to use a gun in a high-stress situation.

Still, he said, he plans to stay in the middle of the road  
See **GUN LAWS/10A**

### Mark your calendar

- **Jan. 17** — “Gun Facts, Regulations, and the Second Amendment”
- **Feb. 21** — “Cascadia Aftermath”
- **Mar. 21** — “From Field to Froth”
- **April 18** — “On with the Show! A History of Happy Canyon”

All lectures meet in the **BMCC Science and Technology building, Pendleton, and begin at 7 p.m. The cost is \$6 at the door or \$20 for the entire series. Students are free.**



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