

COMMUNITY BRIEFING

Community Bank
kicks off annual
Charity Drive

JOSEPH — In an effort to promote investment in local charities, Community Bank is conducting its annual Charity Drive. Proceeds from the drive will be used in that same community during the holiday season.

Funds collected will be matched dollar for dollar up to a maximum of \$1,000 per branch. Last year, over \$23,000 was dispersed to 10 charities in the region.

Since the Community Bank Charity Drive began in 2010, the total amount given to area charities now exceeds \$217,000.

Charities that will benefit this year: Baker City is collecting for the food banks in Baker City; Clarkston raises funds for the Northwest Children's Home; College Place and Walla Walla, Washington, branches are collecting for the Children's Home Society and their Parents as Teachers program; Elgin Branch, for the Elgin Food Bank; Enterprise and Joseph branches are collecting for the Community Connection Food Bank; Hermiston branch is collecting for the Made to Thrive program for children; La Grande branches are raising funds for the Community Connection Food Bank in Union County; Milton-Freewater branch for the City Light and Power Energy Assistance Program; Pendleton branch is collecting for Altrusa's Feed The Child Program; and Wallowa branch collects for the Wallowa Food Bank.

"Since this year has presented many unique challenges, we hope to raise a significant amount for these local charities," said Tom Moran, Community Bank president, in a press release. "With the donation being matched, it can really add up fast, and provide significant support in the region."

Drive-thru window or tubes should be used for dropping off donations. Branches will be accepting donations through Dec. 18. All types of monetary donations are accepted, such as per-

sonal checks, bills, and coin.

For questions about the Charity Drive, contact your local branch manager.

Business Oregon
offers new grants for
small businesses

SALEM — Business Oregon is seeking applicants from businesses in the Eastern Oregon region to meet geographic distribution targets for the round of grant funding it previously announced on Nov. 18. The grant funding allocated by the Oregon Legislature and Governor Kate Brown specified there should be geographic distribution of the funds across the state, and there is currently room for more businesses from Eastern Oregon.

The Eastern Oregon region includes Baker, Gilliam, Grant, Harney, Malheur, Morrow, Umatilla, Union, Wallowa and Wheeler counties. The grants are available to small businesses in these counties that have seen lost revenue due to the pandemic, and that meet a set of requirements.

Business Oregon received 74 applications from the Eastern Oregon region seeking approximately \$2.4 million in funds. The agency estimates another \$2 million in additional applicants will ensure Eastern Oregon small businesses are appropriately represented in the final awards.

The previous four rounds of funding from this program were all only available to businesses with fewer than 25 employees, to help Oregon's smallest businesses first. Most previous rounds also targeted businesses that did not already receive assistance through the CARES Act (such as PPP and EIDL). With the newly allocated funding allowing for a fifth round, the program shifted to serve a group of businesses in need that did not have access to the previous four rounds of grants. This round will now consider applications from businesses with 1 to 25 employees that have already received anywhere from \$100,000 to \$1 million in funding from these federal resources. Businesses with

26 to 100 employees are eligible regardless of the amount of federal resources they received (up to \$1,000,000), if they meet other program requirements.

Businesses are eligible to receive up to \$200,000 in grant funding as detailed in the grant application. To be eligible, a business must show it was prohibited from operations by the Governor's Executive Order 20-12, or demonstrate a 25% reduction in sales over a 30-day period in 2020 compared to a comparable period in 2019.

The application was posted on Monday, Nov. 23 at 3 p.m., and will be accepted until Tuesday, Nov. 24 at 3 p.m.

Applications will be reviewed and processed on a first-come, first-served basis and will be date and time stamped based on when the email or fax is received.

There will be a PDF form to fill out and email back to Business Oregon.

The application form and additional details will be found on Business Oregon's website in multiple languages, oregon4biz.com/Coronavirus-Information/ESBA.

Any information received prior to Nov. 23 at 3 p.m. will not be accepted or reviewed.

Only applications from businesses headquartered in Oregon with primary operations in the Eastern Oregon counties listed above will be considered.

Items needed that will be needed:

- Any PPP and EIDL loan documents
- Oregon Employment Department Form 132
- Profit/Loss statement showing 25% decline in revenue from two like periods in 2019 and 2020 (example: March 2019 and March 2020, May 2019 and May 2020, etc.)
- Eligible period is 30 days, with eligible months being March through August.

Additional resources and information on COVID-19 response can be found on the department's website, and the Governor's COVID-19 webpage has the latest guidance.

— EO Media group

Author of new thriller
has local connectionKATHRYN
BROWN

BOOK REVIEW

If you enjoy reading thrillers or have an interest in paranormal phenomenon, you are likely to enjoy "UFO: Steve Hanson vs. The Flying Saucer," a new book by Olympia, Washington-based writer Matt Andrus. Much of the novel takes place in Portland and around Mount St. Helens, with reference to Pacific Northwest locations from Astoria to Pendleton.

Andrus grew up in Helix, graduated from Griswold High School in 1982, then from Oregon State University with a degree in journalism. [Disclaimer: Matt Andrus had a photography internship at this paper in 1986 and is the son of retired *East Oregonian* reporter and copy editor Bill Andrus.] This is his first published book.

Andrus has had a lifelong interest in mysteries and the paranormal, having grown up in the 1970s seeped in news about unexplained phenomena. For him — and many of us in the Northwest — the specter of creatures known as Ape Men, Bigfoot or Sasquatch loomed large. UFOs were a source of wonder too, along with the Bermuda Triangle and Loch Ness Monster.

Andrus's book draws from real life, starting with the 1947 report of "flying saucers" over the Washington Cascades. On June 25 of that year, pilot Kenneth Arnold landed his private plane in Pendleton, and then told *East Oregonian* reporter Bill Bequette about the objects he saw streaking across the sky near Mount Rainier. That reporting went viral: the newspaper article was shared all over the country by the Associated Press. This sighting, on the cusp of the Cold War, triggered a nationwide obsession with unidentified flying objects.

The novel's protagonist Steve Hanson works in IT by day, and writes a blog called "The Unexplained, Explained" by night. His website skeptically examines

mysterious phenomena.

The story begins in the near future, post-COVID, with Hanson debunking a report of a haunted house in Portland, using his scientific knowledge of sound waves as well as the documented history of the home.

Soon thereafter, the FBI taps Hanson to help investigate a murder on the eastern slope of Mount St. Helens. Evidence at the scene points to Bigfoot as the perpetrator, and Hanson is the skeptic brought in to question this theory.

The attack on a world-famous Icelandic volcanologist has occurred just days before Mount St. Helens is predicted to erupt again.

Steve Hanson is no Jason Bourne. A self-described introvert with a touch of social phobia, Hanson plays classic video games and Dungeons and Dragons. He collects model spaceships and statues of comic book heroes. However, his experience in the Marine Corps during Desert Storm comes in handy as the story unfolds, and he becomes an unlikely hero.

Sinister forces are involved in the murder, and the timing — just before the impending eruption of Mount St. Helens — points to much larger plot.

Andrus ties together America's Cold War-era obsession with UFOs with current tactics used by America's enemies. The story moves forward in unexpected directions, and turns into a political thriller with a bit of romance and a good amount of humor.

We can look forward to more by Matt Andrus in a planned series of Steve Hanson thrillers called "The Unexplained, Explained." Andrus is currently writing his second book, which starts out with a subject familiar to *East Oregonian* readers: cattle mutilations.

"UFO: Steve Hanson vs The Flying Saucer" is available in paperback and Kindle editions on Amazon (search for "Matt Andrus UFO"). More information at www.mattandrus.com.

Kathryn Brown is on the *East Oregonian* Editorial Board, and is the publisher of *The Other Oregon*.

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