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## Creating a Greater Idaho buzz

Cove resident Grant Darrow articulates frustrations of many Eastern Oregonians

By DICK MASON  
*The Observer*

COVE — Grant Darrow is a man of letters.

The Cove resident has penned so many letters to newspapers over the past four decades about pressing issues that he has lost count.



Darrow

One stands out, however, with the grandeur of 12,662-foot Borah Peak in Central Idaho. It is a letter clipped from *The Observer* and kept

in a black notebook. The letter is fading slightly, unlike the movement it helped ignite. Darrow, in his 391-word piece, published in *The Observer* on June 29, 2015, pushed for a sea change — the moving of Idaho's border west so that it could include Eastern Oregon and other rural portions of the state.

"Imagine for a moment Idaho's western border stretching to the Pacific," Darrow wrote at the end of the letter.

Almost seven years later, many Oregonians are imagining just as he hoped they would, which means the the Greater Idaho movement is gaining momentum.

"We are gaining support," Darrow said. "This is an exciting time."

Those who have taken note include *The Atlantic* magazine, which refers to Greater Idaho as "Modern America's Most Successful Secessionist Movement" in a story that appeared in its Dec. 23, 2021, edition.

Darrow is not surprised by the growing momentum, especially when he reflects on the response his letter received in the days and weeks after it was first published. He said about 40 other rural Oregon newspapers printed the letter after he sent it to them.

"Some newspapers even called me up and requested a copy so they could run it," he said.

Today, the letter, which stated Eastern Oregon should be part of Idaho because its people are ignored by Oregon's west-side leaders, is viewed as so integral to the Greater Idaho movement that a copy is reprinted on the website of a leading group pushing for Greater Idaho — Move Oregon's Border, whose leader is Mike McCarter, of La Pine.

Darrow credited McCarter with doing much of the heavy lifting, which has given Greater Idaho the

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## BLUE MOUNTAIN COMMUNITY COLLEGE



Ben Lonergan/East Oregonian

Demond Lofton, of Sumitomo Electric Lightwave, demonstrates a visual fault locator Thursday, March 3, 2022, during a fiber optic splicing course that Blue Mountain Community College and Amazon Web Service offered in Hermiston.

# Amazon splices in

By ANTONIO SIERRA  
*East Oregonian*



Ben Lonergan/East Oregonian

Demond Lofton, of Sumitomo Electric Lightwave, demonstrates a visual fault locator Thursday, March 3, 2022, at Blue Mountain Community College in Hermiston.

HERMISTON — Amazon Web Service attempted inconspicuousness when it first came to Umatilla and Morrow counties by operating under a pseudonym. Now the web giant is openly trying to build goodwill in the Columbia Basin, and in its latest endeavor has partnered with Blue Mountain Community College on a fiber optic splicing course.

On the afternoon of Thursday, March 3, Demond Lofton of Sumitomo Electric Lightwave was demonstrating an optical time domain reflectometer — a device that tests fiber cables. As Lofton joined two fiber lines, a red light glowed from the center.

A student asked the instructors what would happen if they looked directly at the lasers being emitted by the lines. While the human eye was supposed

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## Children's center looking for help from urban renewal

By ANTONIO SIERRA  
*East Oregonian*

PENDLETON — The Pendleton Children's Center is seeking some financial help from the Pendleton Development Commission, but there are some hurdles the group behind the center will need to clear first.

The commission will meet on Tuesday, March 8, to discuss providing a potential grant to the children's center, a nonprofit that intends to build a child care facility at the former Active Senior Center of Pendleton, 510 S.W. 10th St. Charles Denight, the associate director of the development commission, said the commission isn't expected to make any final decisions at the meeting.

But before Pendleton Children's Center can get help from the urban renewal district, it will have to become a part of the urban renewal district.

Although the urban renewal district covers Pendleton's downtown and some of the surrounding area, the former senior center is only a few hundred feet west of the train tracks that form the district's border in that area. Denight said the commission recently considered expanding the district but decided against it.

The other obstacles the chil-



Mark Seder/Seder Architecture, File

A rendering shows the Pendleton Children's Center's plans for the former Active Senior Center of Pendleton. The nonprofit children's center is seeking some financial help from the Pendleton Development Commission.

dren's center will need to overcome is more philosophical.

Although there's no rule or law behind it, the development commission has tried to steer its grants and loans toward for-profit business, the idea being the improved property will increase in value and further boost the urban renewal district through property taxes. As a 501(c)3 nonprofit, the children's center isn't subject to property taxes.

Kathryn Brown, the secretary-treasurer of the children's center board, said the city of Pendleton would realize an economic benefit by helping the group get its

child care service off the ground. With the city facing an acute labor shortage, Brown said an active children's center could help local employers fill vacancies by offering child care in a place where there are few options.

Additionally, Brown said the children's center already is readying an expansion. She said the nonprofit has an agreement with the owner of the neighboring office building to buy the property. Brown added the children's center intends to retain the tenants on the bottom floor, a section of the property that will remain on the tax rolls, while repurposing the

upper floor as a child care space.

Once both the former senior center and office building are operational, Brown said the children's center should be able to meet its goal of enrolling 150 children. The children's center board hopes to use money from the development commission to pay for fire suppression sprinklers, although Brown was unable to provide a definitive number because the board still is gathering quotes.

Denight noted one more possible obstacle for the children's center: the urban renewal budget. Because the commission recently upped its expenditures to pay for new projects, including several street reconstructions across the downtown area, Denight said the commission's budget is less flexible than in the past.

But Denight said the decision is in the hands of the commission, which must way its traditional stance toward grants with community needs.

The commission will meet Tuesday, March 8 at 6:30 p.m. in city council chambers at Pendleton City Hall, 500 S.W. Dorion Ave. The meeting also is accessible via Zoom at [bit.ly/375U6tx](https://bit.ly/375U6tx).

— *Editor's Note: Kathryn Brown is vice president of the EO Media Group, the parent company of the East Oregonian.*



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