

# EAST OREGONIAN

MARCH 12 – 13, 2022

146th Year, No. 60

WINNER OF 16 ONPA AWARDS IN 2021

\$1.50

## DAYLIGHT SAVING TIME

SUNDAY, MARCH 13



Don't forget to turn clocks ahead one hour.

## Gas prices soar as Russian invasion continues

By ALEX WITTWER  
EO Media Group

LA GRANDE — Gas prices are soaring to record highs amid the Russian invasion of Ukraine, sparked by fears that NATO countries may begin enacting additional sanctions against Russian crude oil.

In the United States, President Joe Biden announced a ban on Russian oil on Tuesday, March 8.

Crude oil prices briefly skyrocketed to more than \$130 a barrel on

March 8, the highest it's been since 2008, and nearly doubling since December.

Oregon has seen gas prices rise to more than \$4.50 a gallon, while some areas of Portland have sold gas as high as \$6 a gallon. Diesel prices have risen above \$5 a gallon.

"I just came from Arizona, and this is the highest price I've seen for diesel," said Diane Miller, a competitive barrel racer who was traveling home to Moses Lake, Washington, after a three-week trip to Arizona.

Miller paid more than \$140 to fill up half a tank of diesel at the Chevron station in Island City on March 10. She said that she's able to afford the increased costs at the pump, but she knows several people who aren't. Miller said she will have to pay for more expensive diesel prices all summer as she competes in barrel racing competitions.

"It's definitely hard on America," Miller said. "It's a bad deal, and I don't think it would be this way if (President Donald) Trump would

have stayed in."

### Geopolitical risk

According to the U.S. Energy Information Agency, the geopolitical risk related to Russia's invasion of Ukraine has contributed to higher and more volatile crude oil prices. But Russia's oil footprint on the U.S. market is minimal; less than 10% of the U.S. demand for oil is filled by Russian suppliers, or approx-

See Gas, Page A8

## Local lawmaker makes offer on Vale newspaper

By ANTONIO SIERRA  
East Oregonian

VALE — Greg Smith's offer to buy the Malheur Enterprise came in a postscript.

An email exchange between Smith and Les Zaitz, the publisher and editor of the small weekly newspaper in Vale, over an editorial led to an offer to take the Enterprise off the market.

According to the email chain obtained by the East Oregonian, Zaitz wrote to inform Smith, the state representative for District 57 and the Malheur County economic development director, that he intended to publish an editorial critical of Smith and asked him for comment.

"I'm preparing an editorial for next week about the Malheur County Court's management of your company's contract," he wrote. "You will, in part, get a pass because you can't be blamed by taxpayers for getting what you can as easily as you can. But the issue of your truth telling is another matter. You lie. By that, I mean you declare as fact something you know to be false."

Smith responded by saying he wouldn't respond to "negative suppositions," but also added Malheur County residents were "begging" Zaitz to sell his newspaper and that it had no support.

"P.S. ... if you need a buyer for the paper, I'll pay \$35,000 cash," he wrote at the end of the email. "No employees included."

Later in the chain, Zaitz told Smith he would share Smith's offer with the public.

"Let's see what the community — and the state — thinks of your idea of buying a paper to shut it down," he said. "Thanks for the offer. We'll be in touch."

Smith followed-up by clarifying he would not shut down the Enter-

See Newspaper, Page A8

## PILOT ROCK FIRE DISTRICT



Ben Lonergan/East Oregonian

Reilly Miller, center, walks through proper fitment of an air system with a pair of recruits, Thursday, March 10, 2022, during a training session at the Pilot Rock Rural Fire Protection District station in Pilot Rock.

## TRAINING A TEAM

### Fire district plans on holding first fire academy in June

By BEN LONERGAN  
East Oregonian

PILOT ROCK — Since its split with Umatilla County Fire District No. 1, the Pilot Rock Rural Fire Protection District has been working to bring services in-house and grow its volunteer base and skill set.

"It can be really challenging in a small area," said Herschel Rostov, the district's new chief.



Ben Lonergan/East Oregonian

Trainee Deontae Johnson, preps his air pack Thursday, March 10, 2022, during a training session with the Pilot Rock Rural Fire Protection District.

"Being creative and finding additional ways to draw staffing in is really important."

In an effort to expand the district's offerings, Rostov, who joined the district as its first full-time paid chief in October 2021, appointed Reilly Miller as the district's new training officer. Rostov said he finds it difficult to attract people to volunteer service and he feels ample training and certification opportunities will allow the district to attract a wider base of volunteers.

"If we can tap more reasons to draw people then we can be more successful in covering the fire district in staffing," he said.

See Training, Page A8

## Pendleton Children's Center makes urban renewal pitch

By ANTONIO SIERRA  
East Oregonian

PENDLETON — After hearing a pitch from Pendleton Children's Center, the Pendleton Development Commission left the door open to financially contributing to the nonprofit, a deviation from its previous philosophy.

Two representatives from the children's center — consultant Britney Jackson and Secretary-Treasurer Kathryn Brown — made their case to the development commission — which also is the Pendleton City Council — at a special meeting, Tuesday, March 8. The nonprofit

organization recently acquired the former Pendleton senior center, 510 S.W. 10th St., and is in the process of buying the office building property next door, all with the goal of providing a space for infant and toddler care.

Jackson highlighted her many years in child care and early childhood development before describing what Pendleton could look like with an adequate supply of childcare. Jackson predicted it would not only be a boon to children and parents, but also teachers, mental health professionals, social workers, employers, law enforcement and more.

See Pitch, Page A8



Ben Lonergan/East Oregonian, File

The Active Senior Center of Pendleton, 510 S.W. 10th St., is going to be home to the Pendleton Children's Center. The nonprofit that aims to provide child care is seeking to become part of Pendleton's urban renewal district to qualify for funds from the Pendleton Development Commission.

