

Small-business & Ag HAPPENINGS

Wallowa County Chamber seeks to identify business challenges

ENTERPRISE — The Wallowa Chamber of Commerce and the Small Business Development Center at Blue Mountain Community College are working together to identify the business challenges our local business owners are facing in the next 12 months. Chamber members were emailed a link to a short survey, and the results of the survey will help the chamber plan more effectively for the future. According to a press release, working with SBDC offers opportunities the chamber could not achieve on its own.

Local business offers free massages every month

LA GRANDE — Sage Holistic Health and Wellness, 2205 Adams Ave., La Grande, is offering free massages between 4:30 p.m. and 6:30 p.m. on the second and fourth Thursday of the month. Sage Holistic offers clinics and treats anyone who walks in the door. There is always a formally trained herbalist and complementary health therapist on staff. The business offers massage therapy, life coaching, emotional freedom touch, reiki, acupuncture and more. Call Sage Holistic at 541-304-5022 for more information.

Learn how to become an approved USDA Foods program vendor

The USDA Agricultural Marketing Service Commodity Procurement Program is hosting a live interactive webinar on Aug. 16 and again on Aug. 23 on how to become approved to sell to the USDA Foods program. Both free sessions begin at 2 p.m. and will cover the steps required to become a USDA “approved vendor,” links and tools that can help you through the registration process, a review of the Master Solicitation and Product Specifications and how to get started once approved.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture, Agricultural Marketing Service, Commodity Procurement Program purchases a variety of domestically produced and processed commodity food products, through a competitive process among approved vendors. The purchase activities support American agriculture by encouraging the consumption of domestic foods. Wholesome, high-quality products, collectively called USDA Foods, are delivered to schools, food banks and households and are a vital component of our nation’s food safety net.

To register and for more information about the webinars or AMS, contact Jeffrey Davis at 202-306-2673 or jeffrey.davis4@ams.usda.gov.

Drought-based ‘disaster loans’ are available to Oregon small businesses

SACRAMENTO, California — Small nonfarm businesses in 18 Oregon counties and neighboring counties in California, Idaho and Nevada are now eligible to apply for low-interest federal disaster loans from the U.S. Small Business Administration, announced Director Tanya N. Garfield of SBA’s Disaster Field Operations Center-West. These loans offset economic losses because of reduced revenues caused by drought beginning May 22. The primary Oregon counties are Baker, Crook, Deschutes, Grant, Harney, Lake, Malheur and Wheeler. Neighboring Oregon counties are Gilliam, Jefferson, Klamath, Lane, Linn, Morrow, Umatilla, Union, Wallowa and Wasco.

Small nonfarm businesses, small agricultural cooperatives, small businesses engaged in aquaculture and most private nonprofit organizations of any size may qualify for Economic Injury

Disaster Loans of up to \$2 million to help meet financial obligations and operating expenses that could have been met had the disaster not occurred. By law, SBA makes these loans available when the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture designates an agricultural disaster. The Secretary declared this disaster on Aug. 1.

To apply online, receive additional disaster assistance information and download an application, go to <https://disasterloan.sba.gov/ela>. Applicants may also call SBA’s Customer Service Center at 800-659-2955 or email disastercustomerservice@sba.gov for more information on SBA disaster assistance. The deadline to apply for economic injury is April 1, 2019.

ELGIN



Trish Yerges / ForThe Observer

The JC Johnson Quality Construction Inc. team is currently working at residing, priming and painting the Island City Elementary School to match its new addition. James Johnson, president of the Elgin corporation, and is seen (right), spraying the primer on the building near the front entrance of the school. He expects to complete the painting by August 10, he said. Johnson said he has a lot of other work lined out for the rest of the year.

Johnson’s Quality Construction moves to Elgin Industrial Park

By Trish Yerges, ForThe Observer

James Johnson, owner of JC Johnson’s Quality Construction Inc., is now doing business from his new location since it’s growing steadily.

“I’m leasing the building right now from Gene Livingston and hoping to buy it from him,” Johnson said of the property at the Elgin Industrial Park.

The relocation to the building with its four-acre lot was needed because JC Johnson’s Quality Construction has been experiencing steady growth since it was created in 2013 as a sole proprietorship.

“I purchased (heavy) equipment like my Skids Steer (loader), an excavator and three company

pickups, so I ran out of room and needed a bigger place,” he said.

Last January, Johnson decided to incorporate the business and now acts as its president.

His brother, Shawn Johnson, who has worked with him since 2013, is the superintendent, “and he’s doing an amazing job in that position,” James said.

The business employs eight year-round, and during busy seasons, that number has increased to as many as 14 employees,

all of them from Union County.

Johnson was born and raised in Elgin, graduated from La Grande and attended two years at Eastern Oregon University, working toward a business degree. His entrepreneurial experiences began at the young age of 12 when he had his own lawn care business. This gravitated to the construction trade at age 15, when he started working with a local construction crew on weekends.

“When I was 23, I

branched off to be a sole proprietor doing jobs in Union County,” he said. “I started with a pickup and a small trailer and now I have a 20-foot cargo trailer with a little office in the front, another tow trailer, three pickups, several flatbed trailers, two pieces of equipment, tons of scaffolding, a pump jack system — yeah, the business has grown.”

For the past few years, Johnson worked as a subcontractor for W.C. Construction, until owners Bob Wiles and Dennis

Cross decided to retire this year.

“They’re probably 80 percent of the reason why I am where I am today,” Johnson said. “Jeff Larison, a friend of mine who worked for WC Construction for 18 or 19 years as one of their project managers, was my mentor. They are good people.”

Among the local jobs that Johnson has worked on are the La Grande Plaza apartments, the exterior of Denny’s Restaurant in La Grande and

Possible buyer for Oregon meatpacking company

By Mateusz Perkowski
Capital Press

An Oregon beef packing company that shut down earlier this year has attracted a potential buyer to purchase its facilities and equipment “as a package.”

When Bartels Packing of Eugene closed in March, the company owed about \$4.6 million to cattle suppliers and feedlots and left the local livestock market without a significant buyer.

The court-appointed receiver who took over the company’s finances, Richard Hooper of Pivotal Solutions, has since met with four interested parties who toured the slaughterhouse and processing plant.

Hooper has also been in

contact with liquidators, but owner Chris Bartels preferred to sell the equipment “as part of a functioning meat harvest and packing facility” to fetch the highest value, according to court documents.

One of those potential buyers has now submitted a letter of intent to purchase the packer’s assets as well the underlying property, which is owned by an affiliated firm.

“Hopefully, we will be able to convert that interest into a purchase-and-sale agreement,” Hooper said.

Possible sale terms and the potential buyer’s identity weren’t disclosed but the chance of a new beef packer operating the facilities is welcome news for

Oregon’s cattle industry.

“We definitely need another packer in the game,” said Tom Elder, manager of the Woodburn Livestock Exchange, one of the auction yards where Bartels bid for cattle.

Though he’d like to see cattle prices increase, the market has remained “steady” since the company shut down, Elder said. “It didn’t fall apart.”

Bartels was an important buyer of organic and grass fed cattle, so finding a replacement could boost prices in those niche markets by 10 to 20 percent, said Jerome Rosa, executive director of the Oregon Cattlemen’s Association.

“Competition should really help to drive that

market up,” Rosa said, particularly since cattle shipped to more distant packers are “really getting discounted.”

Hopefully, a sale would allow cattle suppliers to be repaid and the facilities to restart soon, he said. “They had really modernized it and spent quite a bit of money on the facility.”

Upon filing for receivership, owner Chris Bartels expected the company’s roughly \$14 million in assets would cover its \$8.3 million in debt, which includes the amount owed for cattle.

The judge overseeing the case recently approved USDA “trust” payments of more than \$600,000 to eligible cattle suppliers, but

not all sellers qualify for such claims under federal law. Only those who don’t sell livestock on credit are covered by a defunct packer’s “trust” assets.

The Eugene Area Chamber of Commerce has met with the receiver and served as a “resource” to facilitate a potential sale of Bartels Packing, which employed 142 people before closing.

“Our overall hope is to find an owner-operator to run that facility and bring back those jobs,” said Josh Monge, the chamber’s economic development director. “We don’t want it pieced out. ... It’s not just the jobs, it’s the economic activity surrounding that, too.”

Google tracks your movements, like it or not

By Ryan Nakashima
AP Technology Writer

Google wants to know where you go so badly that it records your movements even when you explicitly tell it not to.

An Associated Press investigation found that many Google services on Android devices and iPhones store your location data even if you’ve used a privacy setting that says it will prevent Google from doing so.

Computer-science researchers at Princeton confirmed these findings at the AP’s request.

For the most part, Google is upfront about asking permission to use your location information. An app like Google Maps will remind you to allow access to location if you use it for navigating. If you agree to let it record your location over time, Google Maps will display that history for you in a

“timeline” that maps out your daily movements.

Storing your minute-by-minute travels carries privacy risks and has been used by police to determine the location of suspects — such as a warrant that police in Raleigh, North Carolina, served on Google last year to find devices near a murder scene. So the company lets you “pause” a setting called Location History.

Google says that will prevent the company from remembering where you’ve been. Google’s support page on the subject states: “You can turn off Location History at any time. With Location History off, the places you go are no longer stored.”

That isn’t true. Even with Location History paused, some Google apps automatically store time-stamped location data without asking. (It’s

possible, although laborious, to delete it.)

For example, Google stores a snapshot of where you are when you merely open its Maps app. Automatic daily weather updates on Android phones pinpoint roughly where you are. And some searches that have nothing to do with location, like “chocolate chip cookies,” or “kids science kits,” pinpoint

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