

Small-business & Ag HAPPENINGS

Business sponsors allow ag community to attend Farmer-Merchant Banquet free

LA GRANDE — The 70th Annual Farmer-Merchant Banquet will be held Nov. 1 at the Blue Mountain Conference Center, 404 12th Street in La Grande. With the theme “Under the Harvest Moon,” this year’s event will include a catered dinner, no-host bar, live music, silent auction and awards ceremony honoring and recognizing our agricultural community.

The Union County Chamber encourages businesses to sponsor the banquet or provide a silent auction item. Banquet sponsorship allows local ag community members to attend the banquet free of charge.

Tickets are now on sale at the Union County Chamber of Commerce office to the general public and business community. Cost is \$35. Ag community members attend the banquet at no charge, but you will need to reserve your tickets in advance. For more information contact the Union County Chamber of Commerce at 541-963-8588 or info@visitunioncoLmty.org, or stop by 207 Depot St., La Grande.

Grocery Outlet opens in Baker City next week

BAKER CITY — According to a press release, Grocery Outlet will open its newest store at 295 Campbell St., Baker City, Oct. 11, creating 29 new jobs and “providing extreme value to the community.” A grand opening ribbon-cutting ceremony begins at 8:55 a.m., including the presentation of a donation on behalf of Grocery Outlet to Baker School District 5J. Additional activities scheduled throughout the day include the distribution of Grocery Outlet Bargain Bucks gift cards in “mystery” amounts ranging from \$5 to \$200, free reusable shopping bags and a raffle with a grand prize of free groceries for one year. To extend the celebration, there will be free wine tasting Oct. 11-13 each afternoon from noon to 4 p.m. in the wine department. Must be 21 years of age or older with valid ID.

La Grande yoga studio offers seasonal workshop

LA GRANDE — YogaDawn Studio, 105 Depot St., La Grande, is offering Autumnal Yoga, the next session in its Seasonal Nourishment Series, from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. Oct. 12. No experience is required, and the workshop will be led by Carrie Caselton Lowe, yoga teacher, and Dr. Lorraine Ferron, naturopathic doctor and acupuncturist. The event will include discussion of autumn from a Chinese medicine perspective and what autumn reveals about nature and our bodies, followed by yoga practice, quiet meditation and seasonally inspired tea.

If registered prior to Oct. 12, cost is \$20, or \$30 for two. Drop-ins are welcome for \$25. To sign up or for more information, call 541-619-1090 or email kim@yogadawnstudio.com.

Discounted registration for Conference on Grazing Lands ends Oct. 15

Early registration for the seventh National Conference on Grazing Lands, hosted by the National Grazing Lands Coalition, will end on Oct. 15. Attendees for the Dec. 2-5 conference in Reno, Nevada, can register for \$395 prior to the 15th and \$475 after that.

The purpose of the national conference is to facilitate an exchange of ideas and information on the latest grazing land issues. Featured speakers include renowned grazing experts Jim Gerrish and Fred Provenza. Attendees will also hear from agricultural producers who will share their on-the-ground innovations and best practices for managing grazing lands in an environmentally sustainable and economical manner. The conference also includes a trade show with vendors from varied segments of the agricultural industry. To register online and obtain more information about the conference, visit www.grazinglands.org.

Better Business Bureau educates public on cyber safety

The Better Business Bureau is sponsoring the annual National Cybersecurity Awareness month campaign aimed at raising the public’s awareness of the basic steps needed to stay safe online. Throughout October, BBB will be releasing cyber safety tips and articles to help consumers

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Audrey Love / The Observer

The team of five brokers opened their new business, Blue Summit Realty Group, last month. They all have previous experience with real estate in the Northeast Oregon region.

SELLING A DIFFERENT EXPERIENCE

Blue Summit Realty Group opens for business in La Grande

By Audrey Love, The Observer

Blue Summit Realty Group is already working to differentiate itself from its competitors. The business’ indigo blue house-turned-office on the corner of Washington Avenue and Greenwood Street isn’t hard to spot.

Haley Hines, principal broker and owner, established her realty group in early September because she felt a change among herself and her peers was needed.

“It got to the point where (agents I knew) were ready for something new and an opportunity to have this type of environment — less agents, (but) quality agents we trust,” Hines said. “A handful came to me and expressed interest and a light-

bulb went off in my head.”

Hines officially opened Blue Summit Realty Group on Sept. 4 with a team of five other brokers: principal brokers Jeff Clark and Sharron Langdon, and Lana Anderson, Linda Shirley and Patty Glaze, all of whom have experience selling real estate in the area and join Blue Summit as full-time Realtors. All but one of the brokers are from the La

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Audrey Love / The Observer

The indigo blue house sits on Washington Avenue and Greenwood Street. It stands out, and that’s what the brokers want.

Grand Opening celebration

Blue Summit will hold its grand opening from 4 p.m. to 6 p.m. Oct. 9 at their blue house at 102 Greenwood Street in La Grande, with music, food, door prizes and tours of the facility.

Amazon ups hourly wage to \$15

By Joseph Pisani, Michelle Chipman
The Associated Press

NEW YORK — Amazon is boosting its minimum wage for all U.S. workers to \$15 per hour starting next month and said it will push for an increase in the federally mandated minimum wage, which now stands at \$7.25 per hour.

The company, whose value topped \$1 trillion briefly in September, was facing political and economic pressure to raise pay for thousands of employees.

“We listened to our critics, thought hard about what we wanted to do, and decided we want to lead,” said Jeff Bezos, Amazon’s founder and CEO.

The wage hike also comes at

a time Amazon needs to hire holiday workers amid the tightest job market in nearly two decades, making it more difficult to lure workers who have a lot more job choices than just a year ago. Amazon said it plans to hire more than 100,000 holiday workers, who will pack and ship boxes in its more than 100 warehouses around the country.

“We have seen a labor market that is becoming better and better for job seekers, and harder and harder for employers,” said Martha Gimbel, director of economic research and job site Indeed.

Amazon said Tuesday that the raise will benefit more than 350,000 workers, which includes full-time, part-time, temporary

and seasonal positions. Employees at Whole Foods, the upscale grocery chain Amazon owns, will get the same pay hike. Some hourly Amazon employees who already make \$15 per hour will also see a wage increase, the Seattle company said.

Amazon has faced criticism from labor rights groups and others over pay and working conditions at its warehouses. One of its harshest critics is U.S. Senator Bernie Sanders. His Twitter account, which has nearly 9 million followers, frequently points out the disparity between Amazon’s median employee pay and Bezos’ vast fortune.

Sanders congratulated Bezos Tuesday for “doing exactly the right thing,” and urged other

companies to do the same.

Despite its domination, Amazon shares one potential hurdle that is growing higher for almost all employers big and small: a tightening labor market. The unemployment rate is 3.9 percent, near an 18-year low. The most recent statistics from the U.S. Labor Department showed that in August, the pace of hiring rose again and wages grew at their fastest pace in nine years.

Average hourly pay jumped 0.4 percent in August and increased 2.9 percent compared with a year earlier. That’s the fastest annual gain since the Great Recession ended. There are now more available jobs than unemployed people, the

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