

Small-business & Ag HAPPENINGS

Vote by Nov. 16 for 2019 Wallowa County Chamber Board

ENTERPRISE — The Wallowa County Chamber of Commerce reminds members to complete the membership ballot for the 2019 Board of Directors. The deadline for voting is 5 p.m. Nov. 16.

2019 Board of Directors:

- Jenni Word, Enterprise Director
- Brooke Pace, Joseph Director
- Kathy Casper, Wallowa/Lostine Director
- JR Collier, Wallowa Lake Director
- Lem McBurney, Public Relations Director
- Susan Gilstrap, Small Business Director
- Bridget Brown, Healthcare Director
- Shannon McNeerney, Education Director
- Mike Hayward, Rural Area Director
- Jessie Cunningham, Farm & Ranch Director
- Cynthia Warnock, Timber & Forestry Director
- Nancy Ruderger, Heritage & Culture Director
- Cheryl North-Coughlan, Arts Director
- Jennifer Cooney, Tourism Director
- Penny Arentsen, At-Large Director

To vote electronically, go to www.survey-monkey.com/r/2PQVRX2 and follow the directions for the simple two-step process. If you own multiple businesses as part of your membership you will need to contact the chamber for assistance at 541-426-4622 or vicki@wallowacounty.org.

CPA firm changes name to 'Connected Professional Accountants'

LA GRANDE — Lewis, Poe, Moeller, Gunderson & Roberts, LLC, a CPA firm, has changed its name to Connected Professional Accountants, LLC.

After nearly 70 years in business and numerous name changes due to retirements and additions of new partners, the firm decided to change its name for the last time.

According to a press release from the firm, "Even though our name has changed our commitment to outstanding professional service and community support remains the same."

USDA launches trade mitigation programs

WASHINGTON D.C. —USDA has launched a trade mitigation package for corn, cotton, dairy, hog, sorghum, soybean and wheat producers who have been significantly impacted by actions of foreign governments resulting in the loss of traditional exports. Producers of these commodities can now sign up for the Market Facilitation Program (MFP), administered by USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA).

Eligible producers should apply after harvest is complete, as payments will be issued once production is reported. The sign-up period for MFP runs through Jan. 15, 2019. More information and instructions are available at www.farmers.gov/.

Oregon's unemployment rate remains at record low in September

SALEM — According to a press release from the Oregon Employment Department, Oregon's unemployment rate was 3.8 percent in September, the same as in August. These were Oregon's lowest unemployment rates since comparable records began in 1976. The U.S. unemployment rate dropped from 3.9 percent in August to 3.7 percent in September.

In September, 80,000 Oregonians were unemployed. Of those, 16,000 had been unemployed for 27 weeks or more ("long-term unemployed"), and 64,000 had been unemployed for less than 27 weeks ("short-term unemployed"). The number of short-term unemployed was quite low historically.

In September, Oregon's nonfarm payroll employment grew by a modest 300 jobs. Monthly gains in September were concentrated in leisure and hospitality (+900 jobs) and professional and business services (+800 jobs). These gains were offset by losses in retail trade (-1,300 jobs) and wholesale trade (-800 jobs). Oregon's non-

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Toy Store-y: Tawny's Toy Box opens storefront

By Audrey Love
WesCom News Service

A former bakery and coffee shop near downtown La Grande has been given a (literal) new lease on life in the form of Tawny's Toy Box, opened Oct. 21 at 1102 Washington Ave.

Perched in the windows of the mint green storefront are a tiny bicycle and slick-shiny books spread amongst plush stuffed animals and a giraffe in a kid-sized shopping cart.

Inside are shelves stacked with toys and games to appeal to any age — board games and 500-piece puzzles, craft sets and science kits, LEGOS and sticker books, Slinkys and Lite Brites.

"We sell a lot of toys in Baker City and have had a lot of people say they'd love to see us in La Grande, because we get a lot of customers (from Union County)," said store manager and toy buyer Patty Keithley. "So we decided to try our luck here and

see how we do."

Tawny's Toy Box has been a downtown staple in Baker City for nearly 13 years as part of Ryder Brothers Stationery — a family-owned business dating back to 1901, and bought by the Dodson's in 1969. Housed in a former J.C. Penney building, the business didn't sell toys until 1995, when current owners Randy and Amy Dodson bought the store from Randy's parents.

"I've got a large storefront and as I needed less floor (space) for office supplies and stationery, I was looking for something else to fill the space," Randy Dodson said. "At the time, (Baker City) didn't have a toy store — it was a need the community had, so we decided to give it a try. And it just slowly grew every year. Now, it's half our building."

The Dodson family briefly opened a storefront in La Grande last year across from City Hall, but eventually shut-



Audrey Love / WesCom News Service

Tawny's Toy Box recently opened a second location in Eastern Oregon. The toy store is now open in Baker City and La Grande.

tered the business due to the unfavorable location, lack of parking and small retail space.

Their current location in the former home of Orange Rhino
See **Toys** / Page 2B

Do your kids a favor: Pick retirement savings over tuition

Instead of dipping into your retirement for tuition, consider the other options first

By Kevin Voigt
Nerd Wallet

Most financial planners advise never tapping retirement savings to pay for your kid's education. Even as college costs climb, there are still options to borrow that cash, whereas it's often noted that you can't borrow for retirement.

Yet about one-third of Ameri-

cans with kids younger than 18 say they plan to use retirement savings or "could use if needed" to help pay for their children's education, according to a recent survey by Sallie Mae, one of the nation's largest student loan lenders.

The good news for retirement savings is that number is declining — in the 2016 edition of Sallie Mae's survey, 39 percent of parents said they planned or may use retirement savings as a last resort to fund their children's education.

More parents are now thinking twice about using retirement savings to fund college dreams,

and here's why their hesitation is warranted.

Lost retirement savings could hurt you

Paying for school from a tax-advantaged employer retirement account like a 401(k) can hurt you in several ways:

- A 10 percent tax penalty on early withdrawals below age 59 ½.
- A potentially bigger tax bill the year of withdrawal as the money you withdraw is counted as income.
- Loss of tax-free growth of your savings. Unlike taxable investment accounts, where

you may have to pay the IRS annually for capital gains, employer-sponsored retirement accounts can grow tax-free.

- Less benefit from compounding. Early withdrawals will erode your portfolio's growth potential.

But if you're going to tap into your retirement savings, experts say the "least worst" option is to fund a Roth IRA. Unlike qualifying contributions to a 401(k) or traditional IRA, Roth IRA contributions aren't tax-exempt. But as a result, there are also fewer restrictions on early withdrawals.

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Airbnb landlords agree to pay San Francisco \$2.25 million

Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO — A San Francisco couple has agreed to pay \$2.25 million to the city for illegally renting out 14 apartments as Airbnb units.

City Attorney Dennis Herrera announced the settlement Monday, calling the penalty an important deterrent to others seeking to illegally profit from the city's housing crisis.

The San Francisco Chronicle reported Darren and Valerie Lee agreed to pay the money as penalties and investigation costs. An attorney for the Lees, John C. Brown, did not immediately respond to a call seeking comment Monday.

The Lees were also barred for at least seven years from offering short-term rentals in any of the 17 San Francisco buildings they own or manage.

Facing an acute shortage of affordable housing, San Francisco has struggled with tourist rentals in private homes and apartments since Airbnb launched in the city.

San Francisco now has strict laws that require people renting their homes through online sites such as Airbnb and HomeAway/VRBO to live in the unit at least 275 nights a year and rent it no more than 90 days during that time.



WesCom News Service photo

A San Francisco company has agreed to pay more than \$2 million for illegally renting out 14 apartments as Airbnb units.

The city first sued the Lees in 2014 for evicting tenants, including a disabled person, from one of their properties to rent the spaces on Airbnb. The Lees settled that case for \$276,000 and agreed to an injunction against further vacation rentals in their 17 properties.

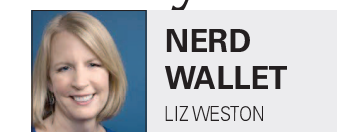
Herrera's office said the Lees ignored the injunction and took "far-reaching, devious" steps to pretend the apartments were being rented to long-term tenants, including drawing up fake leases and pretending friends, family and associates were their tenants.

At what age can you ignore your credit score?

NEW YORK — At some point, you'll buy your last car and refinance your last mortgage. Surely then you can stop worrying about your credit scores.

Well, not really, although there are situations when credit scores shouldn't be anyone's main concern.

Let's start with some reasons why credit scores still matter, even when you don't plan to bor-



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row money.

Lenders aren't the only ones checking your credit. Most insurers use credit-based insurance scores, which use information from credit reports to help set premiums for auto, homeown-

ers and renters policies. A drop from excellent to poor credit can more than triple homeowners' premiums in some states. Credit can have a bigger impact on auto insurance premiums than any other factor, including someone's driving record, according to an investigation by Consumer Reports.

That's not all. Cellphone companies often reserve their

best deals for those with the best credit. Many employers check credit reports, which could be an issue should you want to work or return to work in retirement. Utilities and landlords also typically check credit scores, which might become an issue if you move. Senior housing, assisted living and continuing care retirement communities also

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