

Small-business & Ag HAPPENINGS

Valley businesses join for 'Tap Takeover'

COVE — La Grande's Side A Brewing and the Steakhouse at Cove are holding a joint Tap Takeover event from 4 p.m. to 9 p.m. Jan. 25 at the Cove restaurant, 505 Main St. Those who partake of the Side A beer being served at the steakhouse will have a chance to win prizes.

Government shutdown update: USDA reopened FSA offices for three days

WASHINGTON, D.C. — The U.S. Department of Agriculture recalled about 2,500 Farm Service Agency employees to open select offices in on Jan. 17-18 and Jan. 22, during normal business hours to perform certain limited services for farmers and ranchers. In these locations, FSA staff was available to assist agricultural producers with existing farm loans and to ensure the agency provides 1099 tax documents to borrowers by the Internal Revenue Service's deadline.

Services that were not available included, but were not limited to: new direct or facility loans, new farm loan guarantees, new marketing assistance loans, new Market Facilitation Program applications, certification of 2018 production for MFP payments, Dairy Margin Protection Program and disaster assistance programs.

While Jan. 15 had been the original deadline for producers to apply for MFP, farmers have been unable to apply since Dec. 28, 2018, when FSA offices closed because of the lapse in federal funding. The MFP application deadline will be extended for a period of time equal to the number of business days FSA offices end up being closed, once the government shutdown ends. Producers who already applied for MFP and certified their 2018 production by Dec. 28 should have already received their payments.

More information on MFP is available at www.farmers.gov/manage/mfp. More information on FSA programs and services during the partial government shutdown is available at www.fsa.usda.gov/help/shutdowninfo.

Your employees might not be withholding enough Oregon tax

SALEM — According to a press release from Greg Smith, EOU SBDC director, due to changes in federal tax laws and revisions made to federal Form W-4, allowances for Oregon withholding calculations may no longer result in the correct amount of withholding for Oregon personal income taxes. Employees who updated their federal Form W-4 after Jan. 1, 2018, or who began a new job after this date, might not be withholding enough to cover their Oregon tax liability.

The Oregon Department of Revenue has created an Oregon Employee's Withholding Allowance Certificate, Form OR-W-4, for employers to provide to their employees anytime federal Form W-4 is provided. Employees will complete both the federal Form W-4 and the new Oregon Form OR-W-4 and submit them to their employer to ensure adequate allowances are claimed for federal and state purposes.

The Department of Revenue is reaching out to Oregon businesses to educate business owners of the new form and is asking state organizations and tax professionals to share this information with their business clients. Form OR-W-4 is available at www.oregon.gov/dor and should be used by employers beginning Jan. 1, 2019. Employers will be able to download the form to print as needed, or they may order forms online from the department's website.

For more information, contact Smith at 541-962-1532 or cousbdc@gmail.com.

Credit unions have positive economic impact, study says

TIGARD — Oregon credit unions drove a positive, \$1.8 billion economic impact last year, according to a new report by ECONorthwest, the region's largest economic consulting firm. The report, "2018 Economic Impacts of Credit Unions in Oregon," commissioned by the Northwest Credit Union Association, measured jobs, economic output and income supported by credit unions.

Credit unions are not-for-profit cooperatives and do not pay stockholders. Instead, they reinvest in their members. Last year, Oregon credit unions delivered \$152 million in benefits to members, an average of \$74 for each member. ECONorthwest

See **Briefly** / Page 2B



Max Denning / The Observer

Merri Lee Williams bought La Grande Dry Cleaning from Heidi Van Schoonhoven in December and has added dry cleaning services to her boutique on Adams Avenue.

NEW OWNER FOR LA GRANDE DRY CLEANING

Bridal shop and formal wear boutique expands to dry cleaning business

By Max Denning, The Observer

When Heidi Van Schoonhoven placed a sign in the window of her business, La Grande Dry Cleaning, in August 2017 saying Trump supporters were not welcome, she received a flood of hate online.

One Facebook reviewer said, "I hope your business fails." More than a year half later, Van Schoonhoven has sold her dry-cleaning business, but she said the sign had nothing to do with it.

Van Schoonhoven posted on the La Grande Dry Cleaning Facebook page Dec. 22, 2018, that she was "retiring so that I can help care for my beautiful mother." Her business, which included her inventory and client list, was sold to Merri

Lee Williams, who owns Merri Lee, a bridal and formal wear boutique, at 1019 Adams Ave., in La Grande. Williams has since added dry cleaning to her services.

In June, Van Schoonhoven replaced the sign, which originally read "White supremacy is wrong. Trump condones white supremacy. If you still support Trump, your business is NOT welcome here."

— with a flag that resembles See **Dry Cleaning** / Page 2B



Max Denning / The Observer

Merri Lee's first dry cleaning client was the La Grande High School Marching Band.

"You'll see signs in my window, but they say open for business. Everyone's welcome here . . . There won't be any political anything."

— Merri Lee Williams

Application for 2019 TRT Tourism grants are available now

By Francisca Benitez
For The Observer

Applications for 2019 TRT tourism grants, sponsored by the City of La Grande and Union County Transient Room Tax, are available now at the Union County Chamber of Commerce's website (www.visitunion-county.org) and at the Chamber's office, 207 Depot St., La Grande. According to Mollie

Hulse, president of the chamber's board of directors, the purpose of the grant is to help organizations bring tourism to the area in order to benefit the local economy.

The grants range from \$500 to \$1,000 dollars each and are funded through the Transient Room Tax, a tax that affects hotels and RV spaces.

Applications must be returned by March 1,

and winners will be announced by April 1.

Last year out of the 13 organizations that applied, five won grants. The grants last year funded events including a disc golf tournament, the Cove Cherry Festival and the Eastern Oregon Film Festival.

The Union County Tourism Promotion and Advisory Committee, which Hulse is also part of, has made

major changes to the application process for the grants this year. The committee is in charge of the application process and choosing the winners although the grants are administered by the Union County Chamber.

In previous years, only nonprofit organizations could apply for a grant. Now any organization, individual or business can apply.

"We're really excited to make it more available to everyone," Hulse said.

The application also now has more information for applicants about which kind of events are more likely to be chosen, and more clear guidelines for expectations for grant winners.

Contact Francisca Benitez at frankiebenitez4@gmail.com.

Court allows sale of troubled Oregon dairy farm to proceed

The Associated Press

SALEM — A federal bankruptcy judge has allowed the proposed sale of the troubled Lost Valley Farm to proceed despite objections by Oregon agencies over who will clean up the dairy's wastewater and manure.

Court-appointed trustee Randy Sugarman recently entered into an asset purchase agreement for Canyon Farm LLC to buy the dairy's land, equipment, property and water rights for \$66.9 million, the Capital Press reported this week. The state Department

of Agriculture and state Department of Environmental Quality objected last week to the sale, questioning who will be responsible for cleaning up the property to avoid potential environmental harm. The Boardman dairy farm has approxi-

mately 47 million gallons of liquid manure.

"The current status of the property poses a risk to the environment and the groundwater that must continue to be remediated following any sale," Scott Belden, the agencies' attorney, wrote in a court filing.

Judge Fredrick Clement overruled the objections this week, allowing to sale to move forward.

Officials say the dairy has been out of compliance with its wastewater permit since it began operations in 2017. Lost Valley owner See **Dairy** / Page 2B