

La Grande's *hq* expands footprint

Phil Wright
The Observer

LA GRANDE — La Grande's downtown creative hub, *hq*, has expanded into an adjacent storefront.

The business at 112 Depot St. provides an event space and media studio. It also has been home to partners Cold Coffee Media and Eastern Oregon Film Festival. Chris Jennings, *hq* cofounder, said

the two entities plus *hq*'s administrative offices have moved into 116 Depot St., the former storefront for Goss Family Jewelers.

"We put in word if they ever relocated we would be interested," Jennings said.

The jewelry store closed operations in La Grande in November. Jennings said *hq* and its partner operations were quick to jump into the space.

"And make sure there wasn't another downed storefront, especially next to us," he said.

But the move also brings Jennings full circle. Cold Coffee Media, a digital media and creative marketing firm, began at 116 Depot nearly 13 years ago. EOFF also originated from the space and has since grown into a nationally recognized event. Relocating into the site, Jennings said, is "in line with what I always wanted to do."

With the business and partner offices next door, Jennings

said *hq* is making the event space available to individuals and small groups as a creative production studio. The space has a host of audio and video recording/streaming equipment, and a complete lighting package and more.

The equipment has been central this year to *hq*'s livestreaming musical performances, Three Song Sets. The final of this season's sets was Dec. 11. (All sessions of the concert series are archived and free to view on *hq*'s website and Facebook page.)

In the previous iteration, Cold Coffee Media partnered with local artists to create Satellite Gallery. Jennings said that idea has a fresh start at 116 Depot, where local artists and craftspeople can display their works on the front windows.

In 2021, he explained, *hq* aims to rent the display windows to a local artist or vendor on a monthly basis, providing artists an opportunity to showcase their work downtown. Cold Coffee Media also has created



Window displays at 116 Depot St., La Grande, now part of *hq*'s footprint, showcased gift ideas during the holidays. The window spaces are available for local artists to rent — contact *hq* for more information.

a portal for artists to sell their work online at lagrande.life/products.

Moving offices next door, Jennings said, has served as a good reminder of the value of storefronts. Dark windows can send a negative message to visitors and prospective businesses, he said, while keeping storefronts interesting can itself generate interest.

"It shows activity," Jennings said. "It shows engagement."

Indeed, moments after making that statement, a mother and daughter came into *hq*'s new headquarters to check out the scene.

Like other operations, 2020 was hard on *hq* and the Eastern

Oregon Film Festival, which went virtual because of the coronavirus. The film festival received a grant of \$5,000 from the Oregon Community Foundation and more than \$27,000 in Coronavirus Relief Fund Cultural Support funds via the Oregon Cultural Trust. Jennings said the funds help offset the festival's losses.

EOFF and *hq* also applied to Union County for federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security funding for COVID-19 relief.

He also said EOFF has more plans in the works for 2021, including a filmmaker residency program.



Chris Jennings places a new sign Tuesday, Dec. 21, for *hq* at 116 Depot St., La Grande. The venue has moved its office and administration operation into the next-door space.



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