



Alex Wittwer/The Observer

Union County sheriff's deputy Tony Humphries cleans his police vehicle on Tuesday, April 13, 2021, at the Scrub It Up Car Wash, Laundromat, Pet Wash in Union.

Unemployment increases in Union County

But jobless rates drop statewide, as well as in Wallowa, Baker counties

The Observer

SALEM — Oregon's unemployment rate edged down in March. But Union County's unemployment rate rose while neighboring Wallowa and Baker counties saw their rates continue to decline.

Union County's unemployment rate hit 7.1%, an increase of 1.1% from February, according to the latest data from the Oregon Employment Department. The county had 876 job seekers in March, 138 more than the month before. The county's nonfarm payroll stands at 9,890, an increase of 70 jobs from February.

Baker County's unemployment rate ticked down from 5.7% in February to 5.6% in March, the Oregon Employment Department reported. Baker County has 414 unemployed, nine fewer than last month, and 5,230 in nonfarm work, a drop of 20 from last month.

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Scrub It Up cleans up nice

3-in-1 wash center in Union makes upgrades

By DICK MASON
The Observer

UNION — A revamped car wash, laundromat and pet wash center is making a splash in downtown Union.

Brian and Day Combs, the owners of Scrub It Up Car Wash, Laundromat, Pet Wash recently finished making upgrades and additions to their business at 266 E. Beakman St. The upgrades make cleaning clothing, vehicles and pets almost as easy as reaching for a bottle of fabric softener or removing a lint tray from a dryer.

"We have wanted to do this since we bought it (Scrub It Up) two years ago," Day Combs said of the upgrades and additions.

The upgrades were completed about a week ago and the public's response has been encouraging.

"We have been getting a lot of great comments on our comment wall and our Facebook page," Combs said.

The center's new additions include a double stack dryer and a front load washer in the laundromat. This boosts the number of dryers Scrub It Up has to five and the number of washing machines to 10 — all to accommodate the growing number of people using the laundromat.

"We have been getting a lot of people," Combs said.

People come in day and night to Scrub It Up for it is open 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

It is now a more inviting place to come at night after LED lights were added in the



Alex Wittwer/The Observer

Coin-operated laundry machines at Scrub It Up Car Wash, Laundromat, Pet Wash in Union stand ready for use Tuesday, April 13, 2021. Scrub It Up's owners recently completed upgrades at the business.

laundromat and the car wash bays.

"It is a lot brighter now," Combs said.

New paint and color throughout the facility also liven up Scrub It Up's look. The center's exterior hues now are red, gray and black; its interior is varying shades of yellow and its pet wash station colors are green and lavender.

A new addition to the car wash is a vending machine offering air fresheners and cleaning supplies for vehicles.

Upgrades also have been made to the dog wash station, where new plumbing equipment boosts water pressure for the sprayer, and the hair dryer has been improved so it now puts out air faster, Combs said.

New features at the pet wash station also include a coconut shampoo for dogs.

"It helps loosen the undercoat so that dogs can shed faster," Combs said.

Scrub It Up's pet wash station is one of the few in this region.

"We don't know of any other in Union, Wallowa or Baker counties," Combs said, noting some people come from Baker and Wallowa counties to use the pet wash.

The station primarily serves dogs, but other pets also make appearances.

"Boys and girls in 4-H sometimes bring in their sheep, pigs and goats," Combs said.

Business at Scrub It Up tends to be steady year-round,

Combs said. The Oregon Department of Transportation's move some years ago to use salt on winter roads has boosted winter business at the car wash to prevent the substance from corroding vehicles.

Combs said Scrub It Up provides a desalting solution in its bays because of ODOT's decision.

Combs said she and her husband enjoy operating their business.

"We get to meet such a variety of people," she said.

And their customers are considerate, she said, and do a great job of helping to keep Scrub It Up clean.

Additional information is available at Scrub It Up's Facebook page.

Onion marketing season wraps up

Owyhee Produce CEO says prices at or slightly below five-year average

By BRAD CARLSON
Capital Press

The hitch-free conclusion of the onion marketing season pleased Snake River Produce General Manager Kay Riley almost as much as the volume gain over last year.

"It finished April 1. ... It was surprisingly better than anticipated," Riley said. "This year we were able to get everything marketed, so we were very happy about that."

Onion packer-shippers in southeastern Oregon and southwestern Idaho are wrapping up a 2020-21 marketing season that saw continued impacts from COVID-19. The region, home to more than two dozen fresh-pack sheds, produces 40-45% of U.S. onions consumed from September through March.

Riley said Snake River's shipment volume increased slightly from a year ago, when the crop was smaller and demand plunged in the second half of March as coronavirus



Riley

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Even with pretax profits, many big companies pay zero U.S. tax

By STAN CHOE and KEN SWEET
AP Business Writers

NEW YORK — Just as President Joe Biden is pushing to raise taxes on companies to help pay for his infrastructure plan, a report from a Washington policy group is highlighting how many firms pay zero despite making big pretax profits.

More than 50 of the largest U.S. companies paid nothing in federal income taxes last year, with many getting rebates, even though they reported almost \$40.5 billion in pretax profits as a group, according to the Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy. The group believes the tax system needs to raise more tax revenue.

The 55 companies named in

the report issued April 2 cross many industries, from agriculture to high tech, and they include such big names as Nike and Duke Energy. The report says the companies took advantage of breaks that were preserved or expanded under President Donald Trump's 2017 overhaul of the tax code, as well as the economic rescue package that Washington passed last spring.

Under the 2017 tax cut, the rate on corporate profits is 21%. But companies can use many tools to avoid taxes, such as writing off expenses related to the stock options they give their CEOs and other executives.

Companies can also use a suite of available tax credits by making

investments that the U.S. government is trying to encourage, similar to how individuals can get tax breaks for saving in a retirement fund or making their home more energy efficient.

At Duke Energy, one of the nation's largest utility owners, the company recorded \$110 million in tax credits last year for producing renewable energy through wind facilities, for example. That and other credits helped the Charlotte, North Carolina-based company net a \$281 million rebate for federal income taxes last year, after reporting \$826 million in pretax U.S. income from continuing operations.



J. David Ake/Associated Press, File

This April 13, 2014, photo shows the Internal Revenue Service headquarters building in Washington, D.C. More than 50 of the largest U.S. companies paid nothing in federal income taxes in 2020 even though they reported big pretax profits as a group, according to the Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy, which believes the tax system needs to raise more revenue.

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