



SUZANNAH MOORE-HEMANN
CHAMBER CHAT

Get on board to truly make a difference

Listen, I know you're busy. Things truly continue to be so hard — just, generally hard. It's difficult to find extra time to take on additional work, projects or anything. It's even difficult to find the energy sometimes to commit to one more thing. I get it; I've been telling myself the same thing.

I won't lie — there are definitely times I find myself whining or complaining about all of the sacrificed hours given to volunteering for an organization's board of directors. There is always a constant barrage of emails, volunteers for tasks to be rounded up, or projects to take on. There always seems to be endless meetings, which feel like they do nothing more than result in scheduling another meeting. There are definitely always the days when I walk away thinking to myself how I have my own work to do and can't take on the work of something else.

But there are also the days, after a long work session or huge project is complete, you simmer in satisfaction with your cohorts. You develop deep bonds with other people — people whom you might have never come across in your regular day-to-day life. It's not always glorious moments of classy afternoon tea with those little sandwiches and edible flowers, no. I have fallen asleep leaning back-to-back with another volunteer as we prepared to embrace the late shift of a major event. There have been times we've wrestled with cleaning up broken, overflowing garbage bags. There are the other times meetings run so late in the evening and start so early in the morning, days will go by in between seeing friends and family.

Now, anyone who knows me knows how I love to write. I even volunteer to take meeting minutes all day long (just promise to look for the "Easter eggs" I leave behind — writing is always worth it when it's fun). But, when I sat down to think about "board service" and how to enumerate what it means — why it's important — it was so hard to put into words. Joining, serving and volunteering for an organization's board of

See, **Chamber**/Page B2



Jeanne and Davis Williamson stand outside the recently purchased Maridell Center in downtown La Grande on Saturday, Aug. 21, 2021. The couple plan to use part of the space for their labeling company, as well as opening the upstairs ballroom and downstairs area for community events.

Davis Carbaugh/The Observer

High hopes

La Grande couple purchase Maridell Center hoping it will continue to serve as a community centerpiece

By **DAVIS CARBAUGH**
The Observer

LA GRANDE — A La Grande focal point has been given new life.

Jeanne and David Williamson purchased the historic building at the corner of Washington Avenue and Depot Street on Friday, Aug. 20. The La Grande couple plan on running their labeling business on the first floor of the former Elks Lodge and using the rest of the space for community events.

"We're really excited about it," Jeanne Williamson said. "For the last few years, I've been looking at that building and it's just been driving me nuts."

The Williamsons own Evermine, a Portland-based custom labeling company that ships across the country and overseas. The duo travel back and forth to Portland, but spend most of their time in La Grande since moving to the area three years ago.

The couple have big plans for the big building, most recently the home of the Maridell Center, but the projects may take a number of years. The initial plan is to move Evermine from Portland to La Grande, utilizing the first floor as production and office space. The Williamsons intend to renovate the ballroom on the top story of the building, as well as bring new life to the basement area.



Jeanne Williamson on Saturday, Aug. 21, 2021, points out a vintage photograph of the building that previously housed the Elks Lodge and a recreation center.

Davis Carbaugh/The Observer

Heading east

The Williamsons have owned Evermine for 20 years, keeping residence in the Portland area for most of that time. After falling in love with La Grande, they are looking to fully move to the city and bring their company along with them.

There are several roadblocks currently in the way, such as gaining permission from the city, figuring out staffing and adjusting the company's shipping. The business moving to La Grande could open up new job opportunities in the area, which David Williamson says is

GOT ANY IDEAS?

Jeanne and David Williamson are looking to change the name to reflect the La Grande community. Readers can send name suggestions to the Williamsons at their email address, Jeannew@evermine.com.

a major goal.

"We have roughly 20 employees and we could anticipate about a third of them would move over here, another third that would work remotely and the other third would likely be local hires," he said.

See, **Hopes**/Page B2

Aid may offset drought, fire losses

EO Media Group

PORTLAND — Agricultural operations in Oregon have been significantly affected by wildfires and ongoing severe drought, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture has technical and financial assistance available to help farmers and ranchers recover.

Affected producers should contact their local USDA Service Center to report losses and learn more about program options available to assist in their recovery from crop, land, infrastructure and livestock losses and damages.

"Production agriculture is vital to the state's economy, and USDA stands ready to assist in the recovery from these wildfires and extreme drought conditions," said Gloria Montano Greene, deputy undersecretary for Farm Production and Conservation. "I assure you that USDA employees are working diligently to deliver FPAC's extensive portfolio of disaster assistance programs and services to all impacted agricultural producers."

Ranchers who lost livestock due to wildfire or extreme heat might be eligible for the Livestock Indemnity Program.

For both wildfire and drought recovery, the Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybees and Farm-Raised Fish Program provides eligible producers with compensation for feed losses as well as water hauling expenses associated with transportation of water to livestock.

Ranchers might also be eligible for the Livestock Forage Disaster Program for 2021 grazing losses due to drought. LFP benefits may be available for loss of grazing acres due to wildfires on federally managed lands on which a producer is prohibited, by a federal agency, from grazing normally permitted livestock.

Additionally, eligible orchardists and nursery tree growers may be eligible for cost-share assistance through the Tree Assistance Program to replant or rehabilitate eligible trees, bushes or vines lost during the drought.

USDA Service Centers in Northeastern Oregon:

- Baker City: 3990 Midway Drive, 541-523-7121 extension 106
- La Grande: 1910 Adams Ave., Suite 6, 541-963-4178
- Enterprise: 401 NE First St., Suite E, 541-426-4521

Farm-related business sweats because of drought

By **BILL BRADSHAW**
Wallowa County Chieftain

ENTERPRISE — In a year when farmers are hurting because of the drought, related businesses also are feeling the heat as producers are struggling to harvest the meager crops that shippers such as Farm Supply take to market.

"It's a year like no other," co-owner Craig Willis said. "The harvest this year, as near as we can tell, is about 65% of normal in Umatilla County. It's just getting going here (in Wallowa County), but I'm sure it'll be affected here also."

Farm Supply not only ships grain to market, but hauls fuel, chips, fertilizer, logs, cattle and nearly every commodity grown in the Northwest. The company, which Willis owns



Farm Supply owners, from left, Candi and Craig Willis, stand with daughter, Kylie, near one of the trailers at their Enterprise operation. Like agricultural producers, related businesses such as Farm Supply are feeling the heat from this year's drought.

Bill Bradshaw/Wallowa County Chieftain

and operates with his wife, Candi, ships throughout Oregon, Idaho, Washington, Utah and Northern California.

"We haul ag commod-

ities everywhere," Craig said.

"If it fits, it ships," quipped daughter Kylie.

Craig is even seeing ranchers shipping their live-

stock early, moving them from summer to winter pasture earlier or to feedlots.

"Normally, we don't haul a lot of cattle this time of year, but this year ranchers

FARM SUPPLY

Owners: Craig and Candi Willis
Where: 319 Golf Course Road, Enterprise
Hours: 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.
Phone: 541-426-5915
Email: farmsupply@eoni.com

are getting them off of pasture or moving to different pastures" because of the drought, he said. "We're doing a lot of cattle shuffling."

In addition to Craig and Candi Willis, Kylie helps out in the office and her husband, Clint, drives truck part time and takes care of the cows, while Craig and Candi's son, Skyler, and his wife, Amber, take care of most of the farming.

Farm Supply has about 55 employees, 50 of whom are drivers of their 50 trucks. Most of the others are mechanics who keep

the trucks operating, as do some mechanics the company contracts with.

"We are thankful for the employees we have and couldn't provide great service without them," Candi said.

The Willises have owned the business since 2004. Craig went to work there in 1977, but the company dates to 1938.

"It's an old, old company," Craig said. "I used to drive a lot. I drove every day for 32 years before I bought the company, and then I continued to drive and dispatch trucks as we built the company until about 2010."

"Now he just has to be within phone range because he's on the phone all the time," Candi said.

The Willises both are

See, **Drought**/Page B6