

LOCAL, STATE & REGION



Chris Baxter/The Observer, file

Joe Bell trains in March 2013 in La Grande for his two-year, 5,000-mile walk across the United States to promote an anti-bullying program in remembrance of his son, Jadin, whose family believes was driven to suicide by bullying. Joe Bell was killed in October of that year while walking along a road in Colorado when he was hit by a truck. The movie "Joe Bell," starring Mark Wahlberg, is set to open in July.

Movie based on story of bullied teen from La Grande to premiere in July

Mark Wahlberg plays the teen's father in tragic 'Joe Bell'

BY DICK MASON

The Observer

LA GRANDE — The compelling and tragic story of Jadin Bell and his father, Joe Bell, will soon hit the silver screen.

"Joe Bell" is set to open in theaters July 23. The announcement has been made on the Twitter site of Mark Wahlberg, who plays Joe Bell in the film.

"This family and their story touched my heart in a big way," the social media post said.

The story of Joe and Jadin Bell made national headlines in 2013 after Jadin, a 15-year-old sophomore at La Grande High School, took his own life after being bullied because he was gay.

Joe Bell later started on a national walk in memory of his son to draw attention to bullying. He was killed on Oct. 9, 2013, while walking along a road when he was hit by a truck in Colorado.

The movie was originally scheduled to be released in theaters in February, but the release was delayed because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Patty Johnson, manager of La Grande's Granada Theatre,



The Observer, file

Before beginning his cross-country walk in 2013, Joe Bell embraces his wife, Lola, beside the tiled palmprint of their late son, Jadin, in a display at Riverside Park.

said she is attempting to get the movie booked for showings at the theater. Johnson said she first needs to receive authorization from its distributor.

The film is being released by Solstice Studios and was directed by Reinaldo Marcus Green, and its screenplay was written by Diana Ossana and Larry McMurtry. Ossana and McMurtry also wrote the screenplay for the 2005 landmark film "Brokeback Mountain." The stars of "Joe Bell," in addition to Wahlberg, include Connie Britton and Morgan Lily. The movie was filmed at sites around Utah, including

Salt Lake City and Summit County.

Although the film was not shot in Union County, Wahlberg did visit La Grande in late January 2019 to do research for his part in the movie.

A portion of the movie focuses on Joe Bell's walk, when he gave a number of talks in churches, schools and other

places on behalf of his foundation. He talked of the evils of bullying and what can be done to prevent it.

Jadin Bell's family members and friends said bullying drove him to suicide, and they later launched an anti-bullying campaign called Faces for Change.

Joe Bell premiered at the 2020 Toronto International Film Festival. It was once titled Good Joe Bell, according to the website www.slashfilm.com.

TODAY

It's Sunday, June 27, the 178th day of 2021. There are 187 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

In 1950, the U.N. Security Council passed a resolution calling on member nations to help South Korea repel an invasion from the North.

In 1787, English historian Edward Gibbon completed work on his six-volume work, "The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire."

In 1880, author-lecturer Helen Keller, who lived most of her life without sight or hearing, was born in Tuscumbia, Alabama.

In 1942, the FBI announced the arrests of eight Nazi saboteurs put ashore in Florida and Long Island, New York. All were tried and sentenced to death; six were executed while two were spared for turning themselves in and cooperating with U.S. authorities.

In 1944, during World War II, American forces liberated the French port of Cherbourg from the Germans.

In 1955, Illinois enacted the nation's first automobile seat belt law. (The law did not require cars to have seat belts, but that they be made seat belt-ready.)

In 1957, Hurricane Audrey slammed into coastal Louisiana and Texas as a Category 4 storm; the official death toll from the storm was placed at 390, although a variety of state, federal and local sources have estimated the number of fatalities at between 400 and 600.

In 1974, President Richard Nixon opened an official visit to the Soviet Union.

In 1985, the legendary Route 66, which originally stretched from Chicago to Santa Monica, California, passed into history as officials decertified the road.

In 1988, at least 56 people were killed when a commuter train ran into a stationary train at the Gare de Lyon terminal in Paris.

In 1991, Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall, the first Black jurist to sit on the nation's highest court, announced his retirement. His departure led to the contentious nomination of Clarence Thomas to succeed him.

In 2005, the Supreme Court ruled, in a pair of 5-4 decisions, that displaying the Ten Commandments

on government property was constitutionally permissible in some cases but not in others. BTK serial killer Dennis Rader pleaded guilty to ten murders that had spread fear across Wichita, Kansas, beginning in the 1970s. (Rader later received multiple life sentences.)

In 2006, a constitutional amendment to ban desecration of the American flag died in a Senate cliffhanger, falling one vote short of the 67 needed to send it to states for ratification.

Ten years ago: Former Illinois Gov. Rod Blagojevich was convicted by a federal jury in Chicago on a wide range of corruption charges, including the allegation that he'd tried to sell or trade President Barack Obama's U.S. Senate seat. Blagojevich was later sentenced to 14 years in prison; his sentence was commuted by President Donald Trump in February 2020.

Five years ago: The U.S. Supreme Court issued its strongest defense of abortion rights in a quarter-century, striking down Texas' widely replicated rules that sharply reduced abortion clinics. The Supreme Court overturned the bribery conviction of former Virginia Gov. Bob McDonnell, sending the case back to a lower court. Prosecutors ended up deciding not to retry McDonnell.

One year ago: Florida set another daily record for the state in the number of daily confirmed coronavirus cases, with more than 9,500 new cases. Thousands of people gathered outside a police building in suburban Denver to call for justice in the death of Elijah McClain, a 23-year-old Black man who'd been put in a chokehold by police in August 2019; he suffered cardiac arrest on the way to the hospital and was later declared brain dead.

Today's Birthdays: Former Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt is 83. Singer-musician Bruce Johnston (The Beach Boys) is 79. Fashion designer Vera Wang is 72. Actor Julia Duffy is 70. Actor Isabelle Adjani is 66. Writer-producer-director J.J. Abrams is 55. Olympic gold and bronze medal figure skater Viktor Petrenko is 52. Actor Tobey Maguire is 46. Reality TV star Khloe Kardashian is 37. Actor Drake Bell is 35. Actor India de Beaufort is 34. Actor Ed Westwick is 34. Actor Madylin Sweeten is 30. R&B singer H.E.R. is 24. Actor Chandler Riggs is 22.

—Associated Press

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