

The Blue Mountain EAGLE

Grant County's newspaper since 1868

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 19, 2017 • No. 16 • 20 PAGES • \$1.00 www.MyEagleNews.com



ABOVE: The travelers enjoy a visit to see the Statue of Liberty.

LEFT: The Washington Monument on the National Mall in Washington, D.C., was one of many stops for the Philly Trip group.

Contributed photos

Philly Trip

Positive impression, diversity of experiences for 21 Grant Union students

By Angel Carpenter
Blue Mountain Eagle

After two years of grueling fundraising activities, 21 Grant Union seventh- and eighth-graders and 14 chaperones made their Philly Trip a reality. The group visited Philadelphia, New York and Washington, D.C., March 24 through April 2, during spring break. Traveling to the Big Apple was an eye-opening culture shock for most of the students. “Just walking around New York was crazy, compared to where we live,” said eighth-grader Quinten Hallgarth. “There are so many people.” The trip to downtown New York City included a ride in three limos in Times Square and a night out at the

Gershwin Theatre for the play “Wicked.” One day, the students went from having homemade breakfast with the Amish in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, to going through security at the Pentagon. “I learned a lot about the Pentagon that I never knew,” said seventh-grader Sam McCracken. “I never thought it was that big.” Quinten said he was also impressed by the Pentagon, where they walked a mile and a half of the 17 and a half miles of hallway. “The guys told some funny stories,” he said. “They have a big workout gym. Two White Houses could fit inside.” “My favorite part was being able to see the White House,” said eighth-grader Jordyn Young. “We got to go inside.” Her other favorite spots included the Supreme Court and

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The Philly Trip kids bring the Eagle along to the Philadelphia Magic Gardens.



The Eagle/Rylan Boggs

David Seacord plays the grand piano in the United Methodist Church in John Day Friday, April 7. Seacord tunes pianos and paints and said local retiring piano technician Ed Carwithen is referring clients to him.

In tune with art

Traveling artist and piano tuner splits time between Oregon and New Mexico

By Rylan Boggs
Blue Mountain Eagle

When David Seacord paints, he feels he is merely a conduit for a higher power to work through. Instead of holding the brush, he is the brush. He started painting at 50 years old and has since become a nationally sold artist. Seacord splits his time between operating out of Prairie City and New Mexico. When

on the road, he lives out of a large industrial truck retrofitted with a personal library, kitchen, sleeping area and piano. As well as being a painter, he is also a musician and piano tuning expert. Seacord said he has tuned 10,000-15,000 pianos, which provides a steady source of income between art sales. He said local retiring piano technician Ed Carwithen is referring clients to him. Seacord paints emotionally and rarely knows what the final product will look like.

“Painting is a spiritual process,” he said. “I experience myself as the brush. I experience that there is a higher power that is doing the painting.” People often point out divine “beauties” he subconsciously put into his own art. One example is a small grizzly bear in his piece Frozen Wild Freedom, a landscape of a mountain lake in the winter. Seacord’s publisher, Billie Sheen, has high praise for David’s work and has faith

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County opposes governor’s proposed cuts to veteran funding

Budget increases from Measure 96, but Brown proposes cutting \$10 million from general fund

By Rylan Boggs
Blue Mountain Eagle

Grant County Court members unanimously agreed to oppose cuts to the Oregon Department of Veterans’ Affairs included in Gov. Kate Brown’s proposed budget. County Judge Scott Myers said the court signed a resolution created by the Association of Oregon Counties in opposition to cuts to the ODVA to ensure services for veterans in the county received funding. After 84 percent of voters approved Measure 96, which allocated 1.5 percent of state lottery funds to serve veterans, Brown approved cuts from the department’s budget from

the general fund for 2017-19. The ODVA is expected to receive almost \$18 million in lottery funds but lose roughly \$10 million from the state’s general fund. Under the proposed budget, the department will see a \$93 million increase overall compared to the 2015-17 budget and would add four jobs. The upcoming biennium’s budget will increase to about \$512 million from about \$419 million in 2015-17 with the majority of funding coming from other sources, including veteran loan repayments, bond fees and Medicare/Medicaid compensations. Myers said he was concerned Brown was going back on promises to fund veteran services and didn’t want



Jeff Wilcox

to see them lose \$10 million in potential funding. Of the roughly 7,200 residents in Grant County, more than 10 percent are veterans — 809, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. The Association of Oregon Counties said Measure 96 was intended to strengthen funding for veterans, not back-fill budget cuts. “A reduction in general fund support for Oregon’s veterans would not honor the will of the voters,” the AOC said in the resolution. Grant County Veteran Service Officer Jeff Wilcox said the overall increase in funding was a step in the right direction, but the county needed to have plans in place for when

the money was allocated. He said he was a big supporter of John Day City Manager Nick Green’s proposed hydroponic wastewater treatment plant and housing plan. He thought the wastewater plant could offer job opportunities for vets and called it a “winner for Grant County.” Wilcox also said the housing plan, which focuses on offering a range of housing opportunities, would be an effective way to provide homes for veterans. To better serve veterans, he said the veteran service officer position in Grant County would need to be changed from part time to full time. Wilcox fears funding will be insufficient for the high percentage of veterans in the county. He compared state funds for veterans to a leaking bucket carried from west to east with little left in the bucket when it reached Grant County.