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The Eagle/Rudy Diaz

Len's Drug pharmacists Greg Armstrong, left, and Carl Amstad have more than 85 years of experience between them and were recently recognized as Veterans in Pharmacy.

Veterans in Pharmacy

Armstrong, Amstad discuss changes in prescription prices, drug efficacy and technology over the years

By Rudy Diaz
Blue Mountain Eagle

The medical field might be ever-changing, but Grant County pharmacists Carl Amstad and Greg Armstrong remain passionate about their jobs and their enjoyment in helping other people.

The two pharmacists, who work at Len's Drug in John Day, have more than 85 years of experience and shared their observations over the years, such as increasing prices for prescriptions, improved medicine and technological changes.

Armstrong said the price of medicine has changed drastically over time.

"Thirty (or) 40 years ago, there wasn't anybody who had prescription insurance, and back then, things were priced fairly reasonable," Armstrong said. "It seems that when insurance became the norm, prescription drug prices went off the charts. Back in 1980, there was hardly anything that sold for a dollar a pill, or \$30 a month."

He said the days of \$5 prescriptions are long gone.

Amstad said, in his opinion, the medical field focuses more on money than on helping people nowadays.

"There are a lot of people who can't or don't have insurance, and if they don't have insurance, they can't afford the prescriptions," Amstad said. "I think the pharmaceutical companies way back when were more interested in the health of people. Nowadays it's just the bottom dollar. The thought process has really changed."

Technology also changed, from typewriters to modern desktop computers. Armstrong said, back in the day, they put typewriter prongs on the label for the medicine bottles. They also wrote every receipt out by hand.

"We progressed through the different systems down to the eight-inch floppy disk," said Armstrong.

Over the years, they have also seen

See Pharmacy, Page A18



The Eagle/Rudy Diaz

U.S. Sen. Ron Wyden, D-Oregon, answers questions from Grant County community members during a town hall Oct. 7 at Prairie City School.

SENATOR DISCUSSES CLIMATE AND DEBT

Wyden: Foreign interference expected in 2020 elections

By Rudy Diaz
Blue Mountain Eagle

The national debt, climate issues and the 2020 election season were among the topics at Sen. Ron Wyden's town hall at Prairie City School.

Wyden answered questions from students of Prairie City high school and members of the Grant County community Oct. 7.

Jessica Reames, a Prairie City student, asked Wyden for his thoughts on global warming and what actions Oregon could take to address it.

Wyden said the problem is real but that the state would have a difficult time making an impact by itself.

"If Oregon just does it by itself, how does that position us with the rest of the country?" Wyden said. "I think we have to do this as a country."

There are 44 separate tax breaks for energy in the federal tax code, according to Wyden. He recommended getting rid of those and proposed three energy tax breaks: one for clean energy, one for clean transportation fuel and one for energy efficiency. This plan would help in working with the Republican Party and create "more green for less green," Wyden said.

A community member asked about security regarding the 2020 elections.

"I believe that in the 2020 election there will be interference from hostile, foreign powers that will make what happened in 2016 look like really small potatoes," said Wyden, who is on the Select Senate Intelligence Committee.

Wyden also discussed a bill he said would help, Protecting American Vote and Elections Act of 2019, with three components: hand-marked paper ballots, risk-limiting audits and a



The Eagle/Rudy Diaz

Sen. Ron Wyden looks at the product from the torrefaction plant at Malheur Lumber in John Day after a town hall meeting Oct. 7.



The Eagle/Rudy Diaz

Sen. Ron Wyden answers a question from Prairie City Mayor Jim Hamsher at a town hall Oct. 7.



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See Wyden, Page A18

Oregon RAIN coming to Grant County

Venture catalyst will help connect entrepreneurs to resources

By Rudy Diaz
Blue Mountain Eagle

For people in Grant County who need help starting a business, a new resource is coming at the start of the new year.

The Oregon Regional Accelerator & Innovation Network is a nonprofit organization that goes into a community and hires a venture catalyst, a local entrepreneur who will connect other entrepreneurs to different resources, such as access to capital education and training programs.

Oregon RAIN received a one-year, \$50,000 grant from The Ford Family Foundation to start a venture catalyst program in Grant County.

The organization asked for a two-year commitment to start a pilot program in John Day with a \$15,000 match from the local area.

The Grant County Court approved \$5,000 from Economic Development to be used for the match. The city of John Day approved \$10,000 from its Community Development Fund during its Oct. 8 city council meeting.

Allison Field, the Grant County Economic Development director, presented the program to the Grant County Court and to the John Day City Council. She also spoke with Canyon City and Prairie City about contributing funds for the collaborative program.

"The local venture catalyst will have the job to find these people (potential entrepreneurs) and create this entrepreneurial culture in the Grant County area," Field said. "The venture catalyst will collect data in your region and find out what kind of entrepreneurial culture you have and what you need — and not just, 'Hey, let's go out and make an incubator or maker space.' Maybe you need more of a manufacturing space."

The \$65,000 will be used to hire one local person that will work under

See RAIN, Page A18



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