



The Blue Mountain EAGLE

Grant County's newspaper since 1888

STATE CHAMPIONS

DREW LUSCO AND JUSTIN HODGE WIN STATE WRESTLING TITLES
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Justin Hodge takes down Kyle Hayner of Toledo in overtime to win the 152-pound state wrestling championship title.

EO Media Group/Ronald Bond

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MyEagleNews.com

Oregon identifies third case of coronavirus in Umatilla County

No cases confirmed in Grant County, and local health officials are following CDC guidance

EO Media Group

The coronavirus has arrived in Eastern Oregon.

The Oregon Health Authority announced Monday that it had a third presumptive case of coronavirus diagnosed in Umatilla County. Preliminary reports indicate the county resident attended a youth basketball game in the gymnasium at Weston Middle School, 205 E. Wallace St., in Weston, on Saturday, Feb. 29. The person is hospitalized in Walla Walla, the health authority said.

Athena-Weston School District officials have closed the gym and are deep cleaning out of an abundance



EO Media Group/Ben Lonergan
A sign along Highway 331 in Mission warns that Wildhorse Resort & Casino is closed for cleaning after an employee returned a presumptive positive test for the COVID-19 virus.

of caution. The gym is physically detached from the rest of the school.

NECESSARY PRECAUTIONS

OHA continues to recommend all people in Oregon take everyday precautions to prevent the spread of many respiratory illnesses, including COVID-19 and influenza:

- Cover your coughs and sneezes with a tissue and then throw the tissue in the trash.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for 20 seconds. If soap and water are not readily available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Clean and disinfect surfaces that are often touched.
- Take care of your health overall. Staying current on your vaccinations, including flu vaccine, eating well and exercising all help your body stay resilient.
- Consult CDC's travel website for any travel advisories and steps to protect yourself if you plan to travel outside of the US.

Health officials do not consider the separate school building to pose any risk of exposure.

OHA is investigating the case to see how many other people came into close contact with the victim. Under

federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidelines, other spectators who may have been in a closed environment with the individual would be considered "low-risk" exposures.

Athena-Weston School District Superintendent Laure Quaresma told the Walla-Walla Union Bulletin that the victim is a man who didn't have kids in the district, and the game at the middle school gym was not affiliated with any of the district's sports teams.

"We don't have kids with any symptoms," she told the Union-Bulletin. "We know what to look for, and we have been in close contact with Oregon Health Authority."

The person diagnosed with coronavirus, more specifically known as COVID-19, is also an employee at Wildhorse Resort and Casino, the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation confirmed Monday.

As a precaution, the tribes' board of trustees ordered the tribes to close Wildhorse Resort and Casino, Nixyaawii Community School, Head Start, Daycare and Senior Center until all

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Seneca raising funds and building bridges

Sewer project expected to be completed this year, and fire station fundraising continues

By Rudy Diaz
Blue Mountain Eagle

Members of the Seneca City Council and residents have worked together to complete construction on several projects and raise funds for the new fire station as work on the new lagoon is expected to wrap up this year.

Planning for the \$3.5 million wastewater project began in 2012, but the project will finally be completed in the summer of 2020, according to Seneca City Manager Raamin Burrell.

"Our old lagoons, at one point, were allowed to dry, and there is the worry that the lining cracked on it, and it has been slowly leaking into the ground underneath the lagoon," Burrell said. "Even though when they tested it they never found any evi-



The city rebuilt and widened the bridge on North Bridge Road with help from Nolan Riis, Seneca Mayor Brad Smith, Shane Koppel and Lucas Moore and several other volunteers.

dence of that, it's still a concern."

The construction of the lagoon has also provided a new waste system for the new subdivision. This will allow the city to sell property for new residences in town, Burrell said.

The city also plans to complete a project to chip seal the roads through the use of the Small City Allotment grant from the Oregon Department of Transportation.

ODOT awarded \$50,000 to Sen-

eca in 2016, and the project will focus on main residential streets and does not include Forest Road 16 or Highway 395.

Burrell said, while big projects are planned to be completed in the

summer, the city recently completed several projects through local efforts such as work on the North Bridge Road and a free library in city hall.

The city rebuilt and widened the bridge on North Bridge Road with help from Nolan Riis, who milled the lumber, and several volunteers such as Seneca Mayor Brad Smith, Shane Koppel and Lucas Moore. Burrell said they and several other volunteers helped with the dismantle and the rebuild.

"With the help of Councilor Barb Northington, Suzanne Hood, Mary Carr, Don and Linda Pace, Sue Findley, and Amanda Born, we were able to finish and install the shelves I designed for city hall to house the Seneca Free Library," Burrell said. "Don Pace did all the cutting of the lumber, Linda Pace and I did most of the staining, and Barb Northington, Suzanne Hood and I put them together. Amanda Born and Mary Carr helped me with the polyurethane. Then we connected the two

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John Michael Montgomery to headline Grant County Fair

Opening acts include Jessie Leigh and American Idol winner Laine Hardy

By Steven Mitchell
Blue Mountain Eagle

Bestselling singer and songwriter John Michael Montgomery will headline this year's Grant County Fair Aug. 14.

Opening acts will include Jessie Leigh followed by American Idol winner Laine Hardy, Grant County Fair Manager Mindy Winegar said. Tickets cost \$45, or \$20 for people 12 and younger. Gates will open at 6 p.m.

The Grant County Court also approved at its Feb. 26 meeting Winegar's request for engineering draw-

ings to install a new picnic and storage area.

Grant County CASA follows up with county on funding request

Hanna Hinman, executive director of Grant County CASA, followed up on the organization's previous request for additional funding.

County Judge Scott Myers said, since the last time Hinman was at court, he met with Margaret Davidson, director of Community Connections of Grant County, and that Davidson has her staff researching fundraising opportunities for CASA.

Commissioner Jim Hamsher asked Hinman where she was regarding Harney County's participation. Hinman said, currently, Harney County is not taking any funding requests from community organizations.

Hamsher said the county is con-



John Michael Montgomery

sidering an ordinance to put out to the voters imposing a local 3% tax on marijuana. Should voters approve, it could potentially open up another revenue stream for organizations like CASA, Hamsher said.

Grant Soil and Water District updates court on new approach to water quality management

Grant Soil and Water District Manager Kyle Sullivan walked the court through the Oregon Department of Agriculture's Strategic Implementation Area plan. Sullivan told the court the SIA has been in place since 2014, and ODA is now implementing the project in Grant County.

"We feel this was implemented

statewide without regard to conditions on the ground," Sullivan said.

Sullivan said there is a lack of monitoring information in ODA's SIA plan. Additionally, he said the district is concerned that the program is overly ambitious.

The district's board of directors have many years of water quality experience, and that has not been taken into consideration with respect to the SIA plan, Sullivan said.

Nonetheless, Sullivan said that the way the plan is proposed, it appears that the ODA is looking for input from other agencies, such as the state's Department of Environmental Quality.

Commissioner Sam Palmer said he is concerned the soil and water district will be seen as the "bad guys."

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