

The Blue Mountain EAGLE

Grant County's newspaper since 1868



Wednesday, July 22, 2020

152nd Year • No. 30 • 16 Pages • \$1.50

MyEagleNews.com

Back in the classroom

Schools in Grant County are planning to open their doors

By Rudy Diaz
Blue Mountain Eagle

While students around Grant County continue their summer break amid the ever-present limitations of COVID-19, school administrators and staff continue their arduous work with the next school year on the horizon. In a press release on July 16, Gov. Kate Brown issued a statement on the

coming school year. "As COVID-19 continues to spread across Oregon, it has become clear that school this fall will not look like a normal year," Brown said. "Whether or not kids are in school buildings this fall, we must provide the very best possible education for every single Oregon student, while ensuring that the school experience is as safe as possible for everyone."

School administrators in Grant County continue planning since state guidance from the Oregon Department of Education and Oregon Health Administration will be updated on July 21 past press time and again in August. However, many schools anticipate to provide on-site instruction while complying with the state guidance and regulations. Schools also plan to provide an

online or hybrid alternative class for people who do not feel comfortable with in-person lessons. Grant School District 3 Superintendent Bret Uptmor said its schools plan to open. "Right now we're planning on opening up our schools, and we're following all the guidelines for the 35 square feet per person," Uptmor said. "We're trying to make as much dis-

stance as we can between kids." Uptmor said some furniture is being removed from classrooms to make space. Modifications to class schedules for students at Grant Union Junior-Senior High School are also being made. Grant Union students will be on a four-period day, which will alternate each day on an A, B block schedule. "We call it an A-B block schedule with Monday and Wednesday being A

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Contributed photo/Grant County Assessor's Office
The fire that began at Tim Jewell's property near Kimberly burned a little more than 30 acres of land.

Neighbors rescue Jewell from fire

By Rudy Diaz
Blue Mountain Eagle

A house was destroyed by a fire near Kimberly on July 1, but thanks to the determined work of neighbors, a man was saved from being engulfed along with his home.

Tim Jewell noticed a fire on his property, and he went back to his house to get something to extinguish the fire. He fell in a rut and got caught up in a barbed-wire fence.



Contributed photo/Grant County Assessor's Office

Jewell said he was stuck and was unable to get up and get himself to safety. He said the fire started to grow, and the next thing he knew, his neighbor Dennis Abraham was trying to pick him up by his pants.

"I remember saying, 'Don't, don't, I've got a bad back,' and he said we gotta get outta here," Jewell said. "The fire was right on us. It was like Vietnam. You got a fire fight, and here it is. We're both veterans, and we know about that."

Jewell said that Abraham was not able to pick him up and yelled out to Mike Osborne, who was at the scene, for assistance. They were able to get Jewell up and take him to safety out of the fire.

While Jewell does not remember much else of the moment, possibly caused by smoke inhalation because he was spitting out black residue, he can't express how grateful he is for their life-saving effort

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IMPACT OF PANDEMIC

Oregon county fairs likely to see funding cut in half

'It's going to be pretty devastating for us'

By Steven Mitchell
Blue Mountain Eagle

County fairs across the state are likely to see their funding cut in half in December.

According to Bart Noll, chairman of the Oregon Fair Association, state lawmakers intend to cut \$1 million in lottery revenue from the county fair account, which is the primary source of funding for Oregon's county fairs.

Noll said Thursday's announcement took him by surprise because the OFA had assured the funding would be in the budget proposal.

Noll said each county fair receives \$25,000, a "modest amount."

"It's going to be pretty devastating for us," Grant County Fairgrounds Manager Mindy Winegar said.

Noll said the OFA has successfully leveraged its allocations in years past and turned that money into significant returns to the state by putting on events, renting out facilities and hosting other group activities.

Noll said cutting a county fair's primary source of funding puts a county in a situation where they cannot turn a profit.



Mindy Winegar



Grant County Fairgrounds staff are, from left, Tanni Wenger, Manager Mindy Winegar and Dusty Williams, ride in last year's parade.

Eagle file photo

"And so then that calls into question: Are they going to have the money to start up again in 2021?" he said. "If you have no money, you can't even open the doors to begin with."

Noll said the OFA has been the first organization to take budget cuts in the past to help the state with its budget woes. That is not the case this time.

"Now, it's become an existential thing," he said.

Noll said the fairs do not have

the means to make the cuts.

Already, he said, aging fairground facilities and rising maintenance costs are rendering more fairgrounds unsuitable for public use.

Smaller rural fairs, like Grant County, also struggle to attract large crowds. Last year, Winegar said the company contracted to provide the carnival at the Grant County Fair canceled and the fair could not find a replacement, opting for

other forms of entertainment instead.

Noll said the OFA planned to request an additional \$25,000 in operating funds for each county fairgrounds statewide in the legislative short session this year. Noll said OFA also requested additional funding for a \$250,000 study to determine maintenance and structural work that needs to be done at county fairgrounds statewide.

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LOCAL IMPACT

Grant County Fair adapts amid coronavirus

By Steven Mitchell
Blue Mountain Eagle

Grant County Fair organizers said they are moving forward with a spaced-out, modified exposition next month, scheduled Aug. 7-15, amid the coronavirus pandemic.

Grant County Fair Manager Mindy Winegar said the fair falls under Gov. Kate Brown's guidelines as a "Venue and Event Operator," which allows the fairgrounds to have 250 people.

Winegar said the fair could separate the venues as well.

"We could have 250 people at the pavilion and heritage barn, and then we could have 250 people at the rodeo grounds," Winegar said. "We just have to make sure that it's completely separated."

Winegar said the 250 cap includes volunteers, employees and fairgoers.

"I won't be able to have more than 250 bodies at a venue," she said.

She said the fair would not have food vendors, rides or the



Prairie City FFA member Shaine Madden was the Champion Senior Swine Showman at the 2019 Grant County Fair.

Contributed photo

usual entertainment.

She said she has received a permit from the governor's office to hold a parade Aug. 15, which will begin at 11 a.m. at Grant Union High School and end up at Napa Autoparts.

Winegar said the activities at this year's fair dwindled to team branding, dog trials and 4-H and FFA youth livestock and auctions.

She said team branding and dog trials kick-off at the outdoor arena Aug. 14 at 1 p.m.

She said she does not have the schedule yet, but she will post it to grantcountyoregon.net.

"Our priority is to make sure that 4-H and FFA can put on their show and that the youth can have their options," she said.

Winegar said, for some of the

4-H and FFA kids, selling their livestock could mean the difference between whether they play a sport or buy school clothes in the fall.

"It can be devastating to some families," she said.

Bonni Booth, 4-H/SNAP-Ed Program coordinator for Grant County Oregon State University Extension Office, said they are following Oregon Health Authority guidelines for 4-H and FFA activities, which were updated July 17.

Booth said the activities will be closed to the public, and the youths will be in "stable" groups of 10. Each will be given a yet-to-be-announced number of guest passes, and guests will be asked to wear color-coded bracelets that will be closely monitored.

The 4-H activities will be held at Keerins Hall, and the youth will submit static exhibits Aug. 3-4 between 9 a.m. and 1 p.m. by appointment only. She said the kids can pick up their exhibits on Aug. 7 between 9 a.m. and 1 p.m. by

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