



Eagle file photo

John Day Public Works employees erected a new flagpole near the city greenhouse Sept. 25.

# John Day receives funding to improving signage and waypoints

By Rudy Diaz  
Blue Mountain Eagle

Navigating around John Day will soon get easier.

The city of John Day received an award that will improve signage and waypoints in the city. Outdoor Recreation Roundtable announced in December that they selected four communities to receive funding for their economic revitalization plans. John Day was selected and will receive funding to help implement the city's plans.

John Day City Manager Nick Green said they were awarded \$4,000 in cash with no match required.

Lindsey Davis, ORR's acting executive director, said John Day was selected for several reasons. She said there is a state-level support for this work. The project also supports many forms of outdoor recreation such as backpacking, hiking, biking, campground and hospitality, fishing and wildlife viewing.

Davis said the project also promotes recreation opportuni-

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—Nick Green, John Day city manager

ties at the city's five parks and river and helps tourism and recreation, which were two of the hardest hit industries during the pandemic.

The ORR release said the implementation of the funding is in addition to technical assistance provided by the Recreation Economy for Rural Communities assistance program.

John Day participated in the RERC summit meeting in September, which established possible action plans the city can pursue to accomplish various

tourism goals in the city.

Green said one of the action items from the RERC strategy was to improve signage and waypoints in John Day.

"For example, waypoints connecting Main Street to the city's parks will improve the visitor experience and make it easier to get around town and know where you're going," Green said. "You can drive through John Day and never know there's a river here or anything about the Seventh Street Park or the new Hill Family Park we're

building along the riverfront. This funding will help us identify specific landmarks and destinations to promote."

The city will also receive technical assistance from ORR in the form of staff time. ORR's integrated planning and design team will assist the city with the project, and the kickoff call with ORR will be on Jan. 11. Davis said the money is already out the door for John Day.

"After the destination analysis, we'll develop new sign concepts, waypoints and other destination markers, which we will try to build locally and then install at strategic points throughout the city like our new downtown parking lots," Green said. "This is a quick win, something we can do to enhance the community without spending a lot of time and money.

"The goal is to get people out and moving around, shopping downtown, exploring our parks and trails and getting to know the community better, especially for people driving through who weren't planning to stop."



Contributed photo

Kim Randleas, the director at Painted Sky Center for the Arts, said the center has 10 students attending the arts after school program and 10 additional kids who attend the Friday art club.

# Painted Sky Center for the Arts illustrates growth

Community support leads to more departments, future plans

By Rudy Diaz  
Blue Mountain Eagle

Support continues to grow for Painted Sky Center for the Arts as classes fill up and plans for expansion develop.

Kim Randleas, the director of the Grant County arts center, said it opened in September 2019 when they rented a building in Canyon City. They had a slow running start, she said, but by March all of their classes were full. She said their income was able to cover the staff and building within a few months, thanks to the support.

"Overall, we've had huge support from the community, and if the community is divided about anything, they at least come together around the art center," Randleas said. "I'm telling you, people want to support us."

Randleas said one way the community supports the center is by purchasing memberships. She said some people still purchase a membership even if they've never taken a class because they want to be supportive.

Alicia Griffin, who is directing the center's production of "A Fairy Tale Christmas Carol" in January, said they offer the community a chance to sponsor or provide scholarships to students to help pay for the classes or after school programs.

"We have people from all around the state that might have lived here before, and they see we're opening," Randleas said. "They send money for a membership or scholarship funds. It feels really good to be so supported."

The support helped the center expand on the various workshops and opportunities they provide. They now have eight departments: music, performing arts, youth, visual arts, literary arts, ceramics, leather and movement.

In March, the center closed down as the pandemic-induced lockdowns started in Oregon, but donations continued and the center was able to hire its first employee.

"We are still very solid, and it helped us be frugal with things, and we figured out our operations while we were closed," Randleas said. "We were able to hire our first employee, Mariah Harper,

which was a huge step for us, and now we have office hours and people can come in and register for classes."

When the center reopened, their classes filled up again, and their leather department opened for the first time.

Along with various workshops for people of various ages, the center also has 10 students who attend the arts after school program and 10 additional kids who attend the Friday art club, according to Randleas. She said the after school program is for kindergartners through sixth-graders, but the center is looking to expand in 2021 to offer toddler classes and a similar after school programs for high school kids.

In 2019, Oregon Trail Electric Cooperative applied for a planning and technical assistance grant for John Day through the Touchstone Energy Cooperative, according to the Dec. 8 city council agenda. The award provided technical assistance to the city for a project of their choosing, and they elected to assist the Painted Sky Center for the Arts to develop a strategy for a new John Day location.

Randleas worked with Zachary Manneheimer, a principal community placemaker for Alchemy Community Transformations, thanks to the Touchstone Energy Grant and began planning for the future of the center.

"Hopefully, with Zach's help, it will take us to the next level, which is purchasing our own building," Randleas said. "That's the direction we're going."

Griffin said, as they met with Manneheimer and shared their needs, they realized the massive amount of space they would need to cover every department.

"The reality of having one location for everything is maybe pushing it, but we don't know," Griffin said. "It seems like it might be better suited to have multiple locations."

Randleas said one goal for the center is to bring the creative community together, whether it be through teaching, group gathering or helping the economy grow.

Harper said they aim to create a feeling of home in Grant County at the center.

"I want kids of the future to be able to go, 'That's my home,' whether or not they're interested in hunting or fishing," Harper said. "...This is a very comfortable, homey environment."

# Greenbacks program sees exponential growth this holiday season

\$17,000 in local gift certificates sold

By Rudy Diaz  
Blue Mountain Eagle

Grant County is keeping its money local.

The amount of Greenbacks — Grant County Chamber of Commerce's local gift certificates — sold this holiday season skyrocketed with \$17,000 in sales, more than six times higher than last year.

Last holiday season, the chamber sold \$2,500 in Greenbacks, which are redeemable at participating local businesses.

Chamber Manager Tammy Bremner said this was a good way to end 2020.

"Businesses are loving it when they bring in their stack and I write them a check," Bremner said. "They are very happy with how it all worked out."

Bremner said, in the last two weeks, \$4,350 in Greenbacks have been redeemed from businesses including Bar WB Western Wear, Java Jungle, 1188 Brewing Company, Outpost Pizza, Pub and Grill, Chester's Thriftway, JD Rents and Power Equipment and Roan Coffee Company.



Eagle file photo

**Grant County Greenbacks, available in \$5, \$15 and \$25, are for sale at the Grant County Chamber of Commerce. Greenbacks can be used on purchases at participating chamber member businesses.**

Bremner said restaurants and Chester's usually get the Greenbacks, but more types of businesses are now redeeming vouchers.

"I think they are kind of being spread around, and that was the whole idea when it was set up," Bremner said. "A lot of people thought that it had run its course, and I think they thought we weren't accepting them anymore."

Bremner said the program is still ongoing and that Blue

Mountain Hospital bought almost \$10,000 worth of Greenbacks this holiday season. She ordered more Greenbacks to meet the demand after running out of the vouchers.

"We have a couple people that usually do Green-

backs for employee bonuses," Bremner said. "This year, we had at least six businesses that bought them specifically for that reason."

Bremner said she would like the community to know that businesses appreciated their support, and in turn, they supported each other by buying the Greenbacks.

Grant County Greenbacks are available in increments of \$5, \$15 and \$25 and can be bought at the Grant County Chamber of Commerce office, Bremner said.

Greenbacks are not redeemable for cash, and some businesses do not provide more than \$5 in change when they are redeemed.

Chamber of Commerce President Sherrie Rininger said the level of support from the community was exceptional.

"It's a fantastic program, and it keeps the money here in Grant County," Rininger said. "What a way to support the community this year."

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