

# The Blue Mountain EAGLE

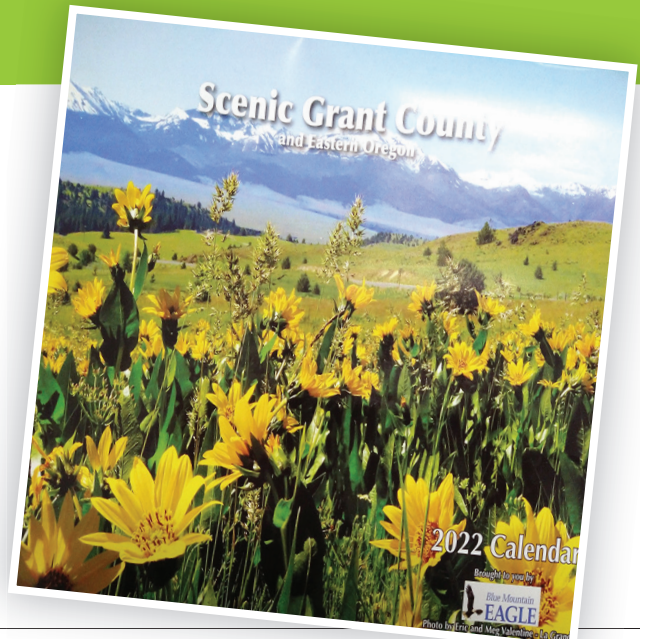
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Steven Mitchell/Blue Mountain Eagle

On Saturday, Dec. 11, a Rude Logging truck drives down Main Street in John Day Saturday, Dec. 11, during the 28th annual Timber Truckers Light Parade. Rude Logging's truck took first place in the timber category.

## Starting to get off the ground

Code changes spur lot sales at Airport Industrial Park

By BENNETT HALL  
Blue Mountain Eagle

JOHN DAY — After lying dormant for nearly two decades, the Grant County Airport Industrial Park is showing signs of life.

Located next to the Grant County Regional Airport on a plateau high above the city, the 103-acre industrial park opened in 2003 with just one tenant: Winner's Choice Custom Bowstrings. Owner Mike Slinkard later sold the business to focus on other opportunities, but he kept the building, which now houses his current venture: HECS, a maker of high-tech apparel for hunters and nature enthusiasts.

The building next door, also owned by Slinkard, is home to Reynolds Rifleworks, a gunsmithing business operated by Jake Reynolds. A third building holds an Oregon Department of Forestry Office and a tree-trimming business.

And that, 18 years after the industrial park opened its gates, is the complete tenant list.

But now it looks like the park could finally start filling up. This year alone, the city has sold or is in the process of selling 15 lots in the facility. Some of the purchasers include Clint Bengé, the owner of Bengé Milling and Custom Woodworking, and Burnt River Farms, a diversified cannabis business based in Ontario that has announced plans to open a dispensary in John Day.

"I'm excited," said Mayor Ron Lundbom. "A lot of cool things are going to open up there."



Bennett Hall/Blue Mountain Eagle

**Lot sales at the Grant County Airport Industrial Park have heated up since February, when the city eased restrictions on business operations at the facility.**

### Long time coming

Lundbom has been involved with the industrial park since its inception, when he served as chair of the Grant County Regional Airport Commission and took on the role of chief promoter for the project.

The city purchased the land in 2001 and used a \$1.5 million loan from the state to develop the property by grading the site and bringing in utilities. Shortly after the park opened in 2003, there were 27 1-acre lots with access to water, sewer and electrical service.

Late that year, Slinkard moved his growing bow-stringing business from downtown John Day into a brand-new building just inside the entrance to the park.

One more lot sold shortly afterward. And then ... crickets. No other companies showed any interest in moving into the city's new industrial park.

"It just sat there," Lundbom said.

It wasn't for lack of trying on the city's part. Lundbom remembers giving tours to visiting executives who would fly into the Grant County Regional Airport to get a look at the property.

"People would get out of the plane, do a 360 and say, 'Wow! What a view!'" he recalled. "If all it took to sell it was the view, we would've sold it a hundred times."

Despite the charms of the location, there were drawbacks as well.

Like a lot of industrial properties around the state at that time, the Grant County Airport Industrial Park was covered by an enterprise zone designation. Enterprise zones confer substantial property tax breaks on companies that locate there. But, in exchange, they also

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# YULE LOGGERS

## Timber truckers brighten up Christmas season

By STEVEN MITCHELL  
Blue Mountain Eagle

Trucks decked out with thousands of Christmas lights hauled in the holiday spirit Saturday, Dec. 11, as John Day's 28th annual Timber Truckers Light Parade rumbled down Main Street.

Well over a hundred people lined the sidewalk and braved the cold to cheer on the decorated logging trucks, commercial vehicles, Forest Service rigs and others. This year the parade had 30 participants.

The parade floats represented four different categories: farm and ranch, timber, commercial and community.

Longtime parade organizer Leslie Traylor, a John Day resident, said the parade was started by D.R. Johnson, who, at the time, operated Prairie Wood Products in Prairie City and Grant Western Lumber Co. in John Day.

The purpose was to showcase the importance of the timber industry in Grant County.

Traylor said the D.R. Johnson family continues to support the John Day parade as well as a similar parade in Riddle.

In the early years, Traylor said, a majority of the trucks — if not all — were log trucks.

The lighting displays of the parade floats, she noted, were extremely elaborate.

"They went to so much trouble," she said, "so much expense to give us some beautiful, beautiful entries."



Steven Mitchell/Blue Mountain Eagle

An Iron Triangle Logging truck rumbles through John Day during the annual Timber Truckers Light Parade. Iron Triangle's post and pole plant, located in Seneca, took second place, while the John Day-based location took third.

Last year's parade, Traylor said, underscored how significant the event is to the community. Due to pandemic restrictions, the organizers could not host an awards dinner and did not seek donations from merchants for prizes.

She said she asked the drivers what they wanted to do, and they told her, "We'll have a parade anyway."

"They didn't get anything for (participating)," she said, "except maybe the satisfaction of heralding in Christmas."

At the close of the parade, the participants gathered at the John Day Elks Lodge for chili, hot drinks and prize announcements.

Traylor has been involved in planning the parade for nearly 20 years.

She said that organizing the event every year is a considerable commitment.

Planning for the parade begins in early October. The committee members pick a theme and send letters to local businesses asking for donations to use as prizes for the parade participants.

Traylor said the final months leading up to the parade become especially busy with coordinating gifts and prizes and running around town. She said she has tried to step away from the planning in the last couple of years.

However, after driving into town, seeing the parade entries with their sparkling light displays and the people lined up on the streets, and then watching a video of the parade online on Sunday, she said she will likely always be involved.

"After watching all of the cars and the beautiful entries," Traylor said, "I told my husband, 'I'm probably going to keep doing this until I croak.'"

### PARADE RESULTS

#### TIMBER

- First: Rude Logging
- Second: Iron Triangle Post & Pole
- Third: Iron Triangle

#### COMMERCIAL

- First: Tyler Nodine
- Second: Madden Realty & JLM Construction
- Third: Patriot Plumbing

#### FARM AND RANCH

- First: Loop Ranch
- Second: S&D Stock Horses

#### COMMUNITY

- First: Living Word Christian Center
- Second: Whiskey Gulch Gang
- Third: City of John Day

#### PEOPLE'S CHOICE

- First: Dakom Logging
- Second: Rude Logging

#### SWEEPSTAKES WINNER

- Rude Logging

# New domestic trauma center opens

By STEVEN MITCHELL  
Blue Mountain Eagle



Steven Mitchell/Blue Mountain Eagle

**Heart of Grant County Director Beth Simonsen addresses the Grant County Court Wednesday, Dec. 8. She said the domestic trauma center will begin offering communication and conflict resolution classes in January.**

The community got an opportunity to see Grant County's newly built domestic trauma center last week during a weeklong open house.

Heart of Grant County, a nonprofit that provides confidential advocacy and protection to victims of domestic violence and sexual assault, celebrated the completion of requirements for the federal grant that funded the new facility.

After Heart of Grant County provided a \$15,000 match, the county sponsored the nonprofit agency's application and received a \$1.5 million federal Community Development Block Grant.

Construction on the facility broke ground in 2020, and the organization has been in the building since June.

The new center features improved pri-

vacancy to talk to victims, a conference room for more group activities in private settings, and the ability to house between two and three families. The agency could only accommodate one person at its previous location.

Beth Simonsen, Heart of Grant County's director, said staff members at the domestic trauma center are not professional counselors.

However, they can coordinate with agencies around the county to meet clients' needs for mental health, medical care, financial help and housing assistance.

"Some of this stuff is territory for whoever we're serving," Simonsen said.

### Communication programs

In January, Heart of Grant County will begin offering classes to build communication and conflict resolution skills, taught by the group's board chair, Nancy

Nickel.

Nickel, who recently received training as a mediator to teach the classes, said during a County Court session on Wednesday, Dec. 8., that the escalation of angry rhetoric in the public sector has been alarming, and Heart of Grant County staffers worry it might contribute to domestic abuse.

She said the group wants to help people learn how to talk to each other and resolve conflicts peacefully.

"People get frustrated, and they lash out," she said, "and they love each other a lot of the time."

She said the last couple of years of the pandemic had been a strain on everyone. But, having worked at the Grant County Courthouse for over 25 years, she told the court she had never seen such a

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