

COVID-19 takes another life in Grant County

By STEVEN MITCHELL
Blue Mountain Eagle

JOHN DAY — The 19th Grant County resident has died after contracting COVID-19. The latest fatality is a 91-year-old male who died at home on Feb. 28. In a Monday, March 14, press release from the Grant County Health Department, the department encouraged people

to be respectful as a family in the community grieves. The department announced that five more people had been identified as positive for COVID-19 in Grant County. The county has recorded more than 1,600 cases of the disease since the start of the pandemic. On Friday, March 11, the Oregon Health Authority reported 15 new deaths in Oregon, raising the statewide death

toll to 6,869. In addition, the agency reported 411 new confirmed and presumptive cases. The Health Department recommends that those who have questions visit coronavirus.oregon.gov or call the state hotline at 866-917-8881. Also, the department asks those who test positive for the coronavirus to let close contacts know to watch for symptoms of COVID-19.

The Centers for Disease Control recommends the COVID-19 vaccine for everyone 5 and older and boosters for everyone 12 and older. Vaccination, the Health Department notes, is still the most effective way for people to protect themselves from the virus and reduce the impact of COVID-19 in their communities.

LOCAL BRIEFING

Grant Union principal to step down

JOHN DAY — Ryan Gerry, Grant Union Junior-Senior High School's principal, is resigning. In a Friday, March 11, email, Gerry said he would be at the helm through the end of the school year and that his contract expires on June 30. The Grant School Board has Gerry's letter of resignation listed as a consent agenda item for its next meeting on Wednesday, March 16. Consent agenda items are not typically discussed in board meetings. Gerry did not immediately respond to emailed questions about his plans beyond the end of the school year or whether he had accepted a position with another school district.



Gerry

In a text message, board Chair Haley Walker directed questions regarding Gerry's resignation to Bret Uptmor, the school district's superintendent, and Gerry. Uptmor did not immediately respond to a list of emailed questions the Eagle sent on Friday, March 11. Gerry, who took the helm at Grant Union in 2015, had previously been the superintendent and principal of Prairie City School District. Gerry's teaching and administrative career began in Prairie City. He had been the superintendent for three years and had taught within the district for 13 years, including seven years at the elementary level and six at the junior high level.

Masks still required in some situations

JOHN DAY — The state lifted its mask mandate for most indoor settings starting Saturday, March 12, but the Grant County Health Department has issued a reminder that face coverings are still required in some circumstances even though COVID-19 transmission rates in the county are low.

Masks are still required for workers in the health care industry and anyone visiting health care facilities, the department said in a news release. Face coverings must still be worn in hospitals, primary care clinics, dentist and counseling offices, long-term care and residential facilities, foster care homes, group homes and similar facilities.

The department said it doesn't currently have a timeline for when the mask mandate will end for the health care industry but will let the public know when it receives some clarification.

Meanwhile, the department said, COVID-19 contact tracing and case investigations are ending for the general public, including K-12 schools. The department will still conduct case investigations and contact tracing for health care clinics, long-term care facilities and residential facilities.

The Blue Mountain Hospital District will conduct its own case investigations for Blue Mountain Hospital and Strawberry Wilderness Community Clinic.

Members of the public can call the Grant County Health Department with any questions pertaining to the lifting of the mandate and current contact tracing and case investigation policies at (541)-575-0429.

Eastside lawmakers hold joint town hall

SALEM — Three Eastern Oregon legislators will jointly host a virtual town hall meeting to discuss the recently concluded 2022 legislative session.

Sen. Lynn Findley, R-Vale, Rep. Mark Owens, R-Crane, and Rep. Daniel Bonham, R-The Dalles, will talk about some of the bills that passed or failed as well as key takeaways from the short session. They will also answer questions and take comments from constituents.

The virtual town hall will take place from 5:30 to 6:30 p.m. on Thursday, March 17, and will be carried over Facebook Live and Zoom.

To participate in the Zoom meeting, register online at <https://tinyurl.com/4wvree8b>.

Questions can be submitted in advance at registration, using the Q&A feature during the event or asked live during the virtual town hall.

KWC friends group seeks logo designs

JOHN DAY — The Friends of Kam Wah Chung are accepting design proposals for a new logo.

The group currently has no logo and is seeking a design that is both identifiable and will help the organization carry out its mission.

Proposals due by 4 p.m. March 31, and the project is scheduled for completion on June 1.

Applicants should include proof of qualifications, examples of past work and two to three logo designs. Logo designs should be accompanied by written explanations of the designs and their interpretation of the Friends of Kam Wah Chung's vision for the project, as well as a budget breakdown. For additional requirements, go to <https://tinyurl.com/yycykhzt>.

Proposals can be mailed to Friends of Kam Wah Chung, P.O. Box 663, John Day, OR 97845. Entries can also be submitted electronically to friendskwc@gmail.com.

—Blue Mountain Eagle

GRANT UNION STUDENTS OF THE MONTH FOR FEBRUARY



Seventh grade
Rillie Mitchell
Parents: Mandi & Jayson McQuown



Eighth grade
Isaiah Adams
Parents: Dustin & Shawna Oates



Ninth grade
Madelyn Bailey
Parents: Zachary & Heather Bailey



10th grade
Sivanna Hodge
Parents: Erin Hodge & Loren Hodge



11th grade
Andrew Hunt
Parents: Robert Hunt & Shana Hunt



12th grade
Maverick Jasser
Parents: Jason & Robyn Miller



Blue Mountain Eagle, File

The Strawberry Mountain range near Prairie City.

Grant funds fuel reduction work

By STEVEN MITCHELL
Blue Mountain Eagle

PRAIRIE CITY — The Grant County Soil and Water Conservation District is busy treating highly flammable fine fuels and annual grasses and conducting an assessment of forest and range conditions on thousands of acres as part of the Upper John Day Resiliency Project after securing a \$1.6 million state grant last month.

The project, mainly in Prairie City, is funded by the Landscape Resiliency Program, a grant program established under Senate Bill 762.

According to the bill's text, the grant program's purpose is to reduce wildfire risk on public and private forestland by restoring landscape resiliency and reducing hazardous fuels.

In February, the Oregon Department of Forestry issued \$20 million in grants authorized by Senate Bill 762.

The SWCD's project was one of nine to receive the funding to treat over 156,000 acres across Oregon landscapes at the highest risk for catastrophic wildfire.

Kyle Sullivan, soil and water district manager, said the SWCD's project uses herbicides to reduce the presence of fine fuels and highly flammable

grasses, such as medusahead and sheet grass, among others.

The annual grasses, he said, can catch fire and burn fast.

"They're highly flammable, and if the fire gets in they move very fast with the wind," Sullivan said.

Sullivan said the treatments knock back the annual grasses for roughly three years.

Altogether, Sullivan said, the district is funded to do the treatment work on upwards of 23,000 acres of land in the John Day Basin. The grant funding, he said, must be spent by June 30, 2023.

The funding fits well with several other projects the SWCD has been working on with the U.S. Natural Resources Conservation Service, which has included pre-commercial thinning on private property and the removal of highly flammable conifer trees.

Sullivan said the fine fuels treatment coupled with the other projects has also been beneficial for wildlife in the area.

Reducing the annual winter grasses is very beneficial for wildlife species. The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife has been seeing the success of the treatments, Sullivan said.

Senate Bill 762 was a comprehensive package passed through the Oregon Legislature with bipartisan support last year. The legislation provides more than \$200 million to help Oregon modernize and improve wildfire preparedness through creating fire-adapted communities, developing a safe and effective response, and increasing the resiliency of Oregon's landscapes.

Pastor Jack Retherford

July 15, 1935 ~ March 11, 2022

Pastor James Arthur "Jack" Retherford returned to his heavenly home on March 11, 2022. His devotion to his family and his firm belief in God supported him in his struggles and ultimately gave him peace.

"Jack" as he was known to friends and family, was born to Jim and Gladys Retherford on July 15, 1935 in Burns Oregon. Jack graduated Grant Union High School in 1954, where he participated in football, basketball and track. Throughout his life he was an avid sports fan and coached many players up until his 70's.

Jack was blessed with a loving family. He married his best friend and love of his life, Betty Jane Freeman, on March 17, 1956 in John Day Oregon. Jack helped raise his three boys in a ranching rodeo lifestyle. He was his children's biggest supporter in their athletic achievements and continued to support all his grandchildren as a permanent figure at every event.

Following the death of his father, Jack found a life of faith and a commitment to God. He became an ordained minister of the Assembly of God Church. He officiated countless funerals, marriages and baptisms and was the pastor of many churches throughout Oregon and Idaho.

He is dearly missed by his loved ones who celebrate the fact that he is at peace with his creator and in the arms of family.

Jack is survived by his wife, Betty of 65 years; his brother Victor Retherford; his sons Rod and Chris Retherford and honorary family Dennis Adkins; his grandchildren Brooke Johnson, Jare' Huycke, Jacee James, Qiera Tucker, Duvar Retherford, and Cameron Retherford. His great grandchildren; Avery, Brynn, Peri, Jack, Jaylen, Brooklyn, Dani, and multiple nieces and nephews. He is preceded in death by parents; Jim and Gladys Retherford, His sister Margie Hoe, and his oldest son Rick Retherford.

A celebration of life and potluck will be held on Tuesday March 15, 2022 at 1pm at the Assembly of God Church in John Day. Reverend Lee Teague will officiate. Jack will be laid to rest next to his father and mother in the Canyon City Cemetery on March 16, 2022. A private family service will be held at 11am followed by a 1 pm graveside service for family and friends that would like to pay their respects.

Pallbearers:
Rod Retherford
Chris Retherford
John Morris
Cameron Retherford
Bill Elliott
Skip Inscore

"I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am you may be also." John 14:3
Paid for by the family of Jack Retherford. 5285837-1



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Fri-Thurs 3:15, 7:00

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DEATH NOTICES

Dean Nodine

Dean Nodine, 89, passed away Nov. 26. A graveside service is planned for March 26 at 11 a.m. at the Canyon City Cemetery. A reception following the service will be held at the John Day Elks Lodge No. 1824, in John Day. To offer an online condolence to Dean's family, please visit www.driskillmemorial-chapel.com.

CORRECTION

Grant School District enrollment: In the March 9 edition, the Eagle incorrectly reported total K-12 enrollment numbers for 2020-21 at Grant School District. The total number of K-12 students enrolled in the district for the 2020-21 school year was 500. The Eagle regrets the error.

Last Week's Temps

John Day	HI/LO
Wednesday	30/10
Thursday	41/21
Friday	53/29
Saturday	59/38
Sunday	50/32
Monday	56/42
Tuesday	49/31

24/7 FORECAST

AUTOMATED: 541-575-1122

ROAD CONDITIONS: 511; TRIPCHECK.COM

NOAA WEATHER RADIO FOR JOHN DAY

162.500 MHZ

WEATHER FORECAST FOR THE WEEK OF MARCH 16-22

Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday
Partly cloudy	Cloudy	Mostly cloudy	Rain	Mostly cloudy	AM snow showers	Mostly cloudy
48	52	57	44	42	47	54
29	34	38	27	30	36	37