

New website highlights John Day

By JUSTIN DAVIS
Blue Mountain Eagle

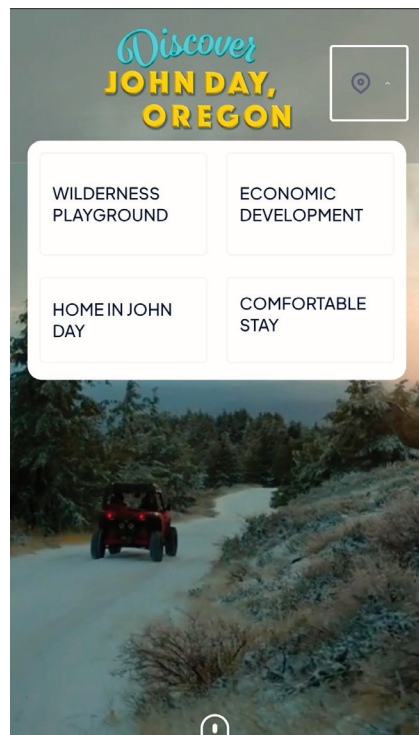
JOHN DAY — A website designed to introduce non-residents to John Day and the surrounding communities went live at the end of March. The website was designed by Portland studio Straw to Gold as a way to give people who may find themselves in the region information on the outdoor and indoor activities the area has to offer.

The website is named discoverjohn-day.com, but it covers the entire county. Along with amenities in John Day, the website highlights features outside the city including the John Day Fossil Beds and Magone Lake, and it informs visitors about various mountain biking, hiking and ATV trails throughout Grant County.

Cost to the city for creation of the website was \$25,000. City Manager Nick Green says those costs cover the website itself as well as video content collected over multiple visits during the past year.

Straw to Gold's Benjamin Ariff says the website's purpose is to connect people with the various recreational and economic opportunities that could make the region attractive, both to visitors and potential permanent residents. "There is a lot of content on the website that is really meant to interact with people from outside the region," according to Ariff.

The catalyst for building the website came in the form of a meeting between Green and Ariff a few years ago. The two discussed the path the city was on and some of the projects and new development starting to take shape in the region.



A new website commissioned by the city of John Day highlights attractions of the community and Grant County.

After a number of conversations, the website emerged as a tool to promote some of the work being done in John Day. Grant County is the only county in Oregon with a declining population, and the city's goal is to try to stimulate growth.

"Maybe people will look at this website and decide they want to visit and spend dollars here, possibly move their family here and put their kids in school, maybe open a business," Ariff said.

Ariff says this project was "much

more intimate" than other projects he's worked on given the size of the town and many of the community members coming out to show their support for the work that went into constructing the website. "There was a lot of excitement within the community," Ariff said.

The project was challenging but Ariff says that is because there is so much within the region to showcase.

"John Day is the perfect base camp," he said. "You get into the city and there is so much going on, but within an hour of the city there is just so much to do. I think we identified over 30 things you can do depending on your interests."

Ariff says his team would consider the website a success if it becomes a tool for new people to become informed about what John Day has to offer. "We want people to see and understand the possibilities and take the next step." Those next steps could be anything from deciding to vacation in Grant County to visiting a local business or maybe even moving their business here.

"The website is very friendly and digestible," Ariff said. "It doesn't use the typical marketing language other websites use. That is how we wanted to present John Day and the region."

Ariff says the website took more than a year to develop and is mostly driven by video content. The intention is to continue to develop the site and keep information on the site in line with ongoing projects in the area.

"This is one of the most fun projects I've ever done," he said. "Really friendly and accommodating people. I feel really connected to the city, and it doesn't always work out that way."

Eagle schedules candidate forum

Blue Mountain Eagle

JOHN DAY — The Blue Mountain Eagle will host a public forum with the three announced candidates for Grant County commissioner in the May 17 election.

The free event will be held from 6 to 7:30 p.m. on Wednesday, April 20, in the large conference room at the Grant County Regional Airport, 720 Airport Road, John Day.

Scott Knepper of Prairie City, John Rowell of John Day and Mark Webb of Mt. Vernon

are running to fill the seat on the Grant County Court being vacated by Sam Palmer, who is running for the Republican nomination for a U.S. Senate seat. The candidates will talk about their qualifications, discuss their positions on issues facing the county and answer questions about the campaign. Blue Mountain Eagle Editor Bennett Hall will moderate the discussion.

Members of the public are invited to attend in person. The event will also be streamed live on the Eagle's Facebook page.

Governor hopeful Pulliam to visit

Blue Mountain Eagle

JOHN DAY — Republican gubernatorial candidate Stan Pulliam will make a campaign stop in John Day this week during a swing through Eastern Oregon.

Pulliam, the mayor of Sandy, will be at the Squeeze-In Restaurant and

Deck, 423 W. Main St., from noon to 1:30 p.m. on Friday, April 15, to meet with voters, talk about his positions and discuss the issues facing the state.

Pulliam is one of 34 candidates who have filed to seek the GOP nomination for governor in the May 17 primary election.

Fourth Avenue repairs going out to bid

By JUSTIN DAVIS
Blue Mountain Eagle

JOHN DAY — Bidding is set to begin for repairs to a flood-damaged portion of Southwest Fourth Avenue after the city obtained grant funding to cover the project.

Damage to the road occurred during spring flooding of Canyon Creek in 2019. Since then, a section of the road just west of the creek has been restricted to one lane. The COVID-19 pandemic, funding disagreements between the city of John Day and Grant County as well as multiple design iterations have delayed work on the project.

The original plan relied on a \$1.2 million grant from the Federal Emergency Management Agency to fix the dam-



The damaged road and eroded embankment on Southwest Fourth Avenue in John Day. The road has been in need of repairs for almost three years.

age. FEMA was set to cover 75 percent of the cost of the repairs with a 25 percent match required. John Day City Manager Nick Green says the project is now 100% grant-funded, and the latest

design will cost less than previously estimated.

The project will be put up for bidding in May. The cost of the repairs is slated to be \$1.1 million, although Green stresses that number is a pro-

jection. "We won't have an actual cost until we get bids back," he said.

John Day engineering firm Sistul Engineering is in charge of design plans for the project.

Green says the project will take roughly three months to complete once construction starts; those seeking to travel to the airport will need to take an alternate route until the repair work is completed.

In a May 2021 interview, John Day Mayor Ron Lundbom called the repairs an "extraordinary situation" that the city could not budget for.

Lundbom described Fourth Avenue as a "critical access route to the Grant County Regional Airport and other emergency services" in that same 2021 interview.

Demolition derby runs out of gas

By STEVEN MITCHELL
Blue Mountain Eagle

CANYON CITY — Organizers of the annual demolition derby at the Grant County Fairgrounds are canceling the event this year and likely in the foreseeable future due to a lack of local drivers with cars and soaring fuel costs.

Colby Farrell with the Whiskey Gulch Gang, the group that has organized the event for the last 30 years, said organizers knew they might have to make the difficult decision of calling off the event for quite some time.

For the last 10 to 15 years,

he said, the organizers have struggled to find enough people with cars to compete as they are becoming more and more expensive every year.

This year, he said, with rising fuel costs, drivers with cars are setting their sights on bigger derbies in larger areas where they have a chance at winning considerably more prize money.

Grant County, he said, does not have the facilities or population to compete. Even if they were to try to go bigger, Grant County is a long way for a driver to travel.

Last year, he said, except for two cars from Burns,

roughly 100 miles away, every other vehicle traveled from Idaho or farther to compete. Farrell said he spoke with most of those drivers, and they said fuel costs were just too high for them to make the trek to Grant County.

"We've seen it coming for quite a while," Farrell said. "We just kept holding out hope that more local guys would get involved and start building cars, but it just has not happened."

Farrell added there are reasons for that. For example, some fight fire during the summer months or have other jobs that take them out of the community. Additionally, he said, building a car for a demolition derby is a significant investment of time and money. Farrell added that parts have become more expensive and harder to find.

In the derby's heyday, there were between five and six Grant County cars with another four or five from within 100 miles of the

county. The organizers, Farrell said, knew they would have competitors.

He said that the Whiskey Gulch Gang would need to have that many drivers on tap to compete before opening the gates at the fairgrounds to bring back the event.

"We know that this will be greatly disappointing for many people," Farrell said, "especially the kids and families who loved seeing the cars smash into each other, but we cannot continue to just open the gates and hope enough cars show up from anywhere and everywhere to have enough to make sure the crowd gets a good show and feel they got their money's worth."

In the meantime, he said, the Whiskey Gulch Gang, which organizes Canyon City's '62 Days every year in June, will focus on other events and entertainment for summers in Grant County. For instance, the group wants to open the historic Sel's Brewery a few more times each year.

LOCAL BRIEFING

New community health leader named

HERMISTON — Greater Oregon Behavioral Health Inc. has tapped Hermiston resident Lourdes Reyna Alcalá to head the organization's community health engagement efforts in Eastern Oregon, GOBHI announced.

In her new role, Reyna Alcalá will serve as GOBHI's community health development manager and will work closely with the Eastern Oregon Coordinated Care Organization, overseeing a team that facilitates work with the CCO's community health providers in 12 Eastern Oregon counties.

She has previously worked in early childhood services and most recently served as a family support specialist with the Intermountain Education Service District. She is fluent in both English and Spanish, holds a bachelor's degree from Washington State University and is pursuing a master's degree in special education from the University of Oregon.



Alcalá

Rancher relief payments set to begin

SALEM — Oregon ranchers who lost forage because of wildfire or drought last year could soon start receiving payments from a U.S. Department of Agriculture program.

Payments through the USDA Farm Service Agency's Emergency Livestock Relief Program will be made to ranchers who have approved applications under the Livestock Forage Disaster Program through 2021, the agency said in a news release.

The Farm Service Agency's Oregon office received 2,325 applications requesting nearly \$32 million in assistance for last year and is preparing to release \$26 million in payments, but that does not include outstanding applications.

The agency said it will continue to evaluate drought and fire impacts from 2021 "to ensure equitable and inclusive distribution of much-needed emergency relief program benefits."

State seeks relatives of WWII vet

SALEM — The Oregon Department of Veterans Affairs is trying to find surviving relatives of a deceased veteran to make sure the dead soldier's medals stay in his family.

George E. Hodgdon, who served as a first lieutenant in the Army during the Italian campaign in World War II, died in 1969 and left no surviving spouse. Recently, however, Hodgdon's medals were discovered in a house in Lake Oswego that was being demolished. The decorations were turned over to ODVA, which is now trying to track down Hodgdon's living descendants, the agency said in a news release.

Among the medals were the Distinguished Service Cross, America's second-highest award for military heroism, and the Medaglia al Valore Militaire, Italy's equivalent of the Medal of Honor. Hodgdon received the Distinguished Service Cross for his actions during a battle against German forces in January 1944 near Cisterna di Littoria, Italy, during which he led a rally against heavy rifle and machine gun fire to destroy an enemy tank.

Anyone with information about Hodgdon's relatives or other loved ones is asked to contact ODVA spokesman Tyler Francke at tyler.francke@odva.oregon.gov.

— Blue Mountain Eagle

*Celebration of Life
for
Carol Coombs
April 23 at 12:00 PM
at Depot Park in Prairie City.*

Last Week's Temps

John Day	HI/LO
Wednesday	59/30
Thursday.....	73/42
Friday	59/31
Saturday	43/27
Sunday.....	37/25
Monday.....	39/24
Tuesday	35/22

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 APRIL 13-19

Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday
AM snow showers	Snow showers	PM showers	Rain/snow showers	Partly cloudy	Mostly cloudy	Showers
35 23	39 26	43 31	41 25	48 31	56 39	49 30