

THE LATEST ON THE TYLER SMITH TRIAL

PAGE A16

The *Blue Mountain*
EAGLE
Grant County's newspaper since 1868



Wednesday, June 8, 2022

154th Year • No. 23 • 16 Pages • \$1.50

MyEagleNews.com



Blue Mountain Eagle, File
The parent company of the Prairie Wood Products sawmill in Prairie City intends to reopen the facility in early July and plans on hiring roughly 50 employees.

Prairie Wood Products set to reopen

By STEVEN MITCHELL
Blue Mountain Eagle

PRAIRIE CITY — The parent company of the Prairie Wood Products sawmill in Prairie City intends to reopen the facility in early July and plans on hiring roughly 50 employees.

The D.R. Johnson Lumber Co. announced in a Wednesday, June 1, press release that the sawmill will host a job fair at Chester's Thriftway in John Day on Monday and Tuesday, June 13 and 14, from 10:30 a.m. to 6:30 p.m.

According to the press release, the company is looking to fill a variety of jobs, from maintenance and production to a job in human resources. Additionally, the sawmill is looking to fill five management positions.

Asked what the approximate pay range of the jobs would be, Prairie Wood Products President Jodi Westbrooks said in an email that the positions would offer a "family wage" with "competitive benefits." Westbrooks added that more information would be released as the mill reopens in the summer. While she did not say how many employees have been hired so far, she did say all of the current employees are Grant County residents.

The Prairie Wood Products mill will focus on producing 8- to 9-foot Douglas fir studs. Westbrooks said the company plans to get its timber supply from a combination of public and private lands and would purchase its timber from independent loggers and landowners.

Malheur Lumber, Grant County's only other sawmill, primarily processes pine, according to Craig Trulock, Malheur National Forest supervisor. Trulock

See Sawmill, Page A10

After Uvalde



Grant County school officials take stock in wake of Texas school shooting

Local law enforcement beefs up response plans

By JUSTIN DAVIS
Blue Mountain Eagle

The shooting in Uvalde, Texas, on May 24 left 19 students and two teachers dead and 17 other people injured. In the aftermath of that shooting, many local school districts are asking themselves if they are doing enough to prevent a similar occurrence in their schools.

Plans including school resource officers, armed teachers and even armed veterans at schools are being debated nationally as a deterrent to school shootings with administrators torn as to which path to take to make their schools and students safer.

Here in Grant County, Humbolt Elementary Principal Janine Attlesperger said she and her staff regularly prepare for an active shooter scenario. "We do trainings throughout the year and we do drills with the kids."

Attlesperger calls the staffing shortage in local law enforcement agencies "concerning" but stresses there hasn't been a lot going on. "Each time we have had to call, response has been very quick, so we've been pleased with that, but it is concerning that we no longer have city police and they're

stretched very thin. We're super hopeful that we can get (a school resource officer) that will cover all of our schools," Attlesperger said.

The John Day Police Department used to provide a school resource officer, or SRO, under contract to the Grant School District, but the department was shut down in October due to budget constraints. A similar contract with the Grant County Sheriff's Office is expected to go into effect next fall.

An officer assigned to the district's three schools — Humbolt, Grant Union and Seneca — would go a long way toward deterring a potential school shooter just by their presence, according to Attlesperger. As it stands now, she and her custodians share a large portion of the burden of making sure their school is safe and secure.

"It's up to me and the custodians to make sure the doors aren't left open and everything is locked. We do our rounds regularly throughout the day, but having an SRO help out with that throughout the day would be great."

The school does take precautions to ensure the safety of students and staff, but Attlesperger said there is room for improvement.

See School, Page A10

By STEVEN MITCHELL
Blue Mountain Eagle

CANYON CITY — Even before the slaughter in Uvalde, Texas, last month, law enforcement officials in Grant County were looking at beefing up response plans for a potential school shooting here.

Now those efforts have taken on even greater urgency.

"It just made it come to the forefront even more," Sheriff Todd McKinley said.

Amid conflicting reports that police in Uvalde may not have acted quickly enough to stop the Robb Elementary School shooter, the issue of what police should do when a school is under attack has entered into the

national conversation. Following calls for a federal investigation from Uvalde Mayor Don McLaughlin, the Justice Department aims to highlight the lessons learned in Uvalde and identify practices that could help first responders in other communities prepare to deal with active shooter situations in the future.

For his part, McKinley says there is not enough information out there for him to play "armchair quarterback" on the law enforcement response in Uvalde.

That said, he and his deputies are committed to protecting the people of Grant County, whether the threat is

See Police, Page A10



McKinley

County's third wolf attack confirmed

By STEVEN MITCHELL
Blue Mountain Eagle

GRANT COUNTY — State wildlife officials have confirmed a second wolf depredation on the Middle Fork of the John Day River, the third such incident recorded in Grant County.

The 350-pound calf that was injured in the most recent attack had been on the same pasture where two calves were killed by wolves last month, according to a Thursday, June 2, report from the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife.

The report noted that the livestock producer discovered the injured animal in the privately-owned pasture on Mon-

day, May 30, but scheduled the visit from state fish and wildlife officials to conduct the investigation on Wednesday, June 1.

ODFW's report estimated the calf's injuries occurred over two and half weeks ago and concluded that the bite marks and other injuries to the calf were consistent with wolf attacks seen on live calves.

ODFW's report concluded that the Desolation Pack was responsible for the most recent attack as well as the two livestock kills reported in the same area on the Middle Fork of the John Day River last month.

Thursday's report marks the third confirmed wolf depredation in Grant County in just

over a year. The first occurred in May 2021 in Fox Valley.

According to the Oregon Wolf Conservation and Management 2021 Annual Report, the Desolation Pack increased from five wolves to nine this year.

A pack is defined as more than four wolves traveling together in the winter. The Desolation Pack also met the criterion of having a breeding pair. A breeding pair is an adult male and adult female with at least two pups that survived to Dec. 31 in the year of their birth.

The Desolation Pack is a resident pack in Grant County and resides primarily at the north end of the county.



Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife/Contributed Photo
A trail cam photo from May 30 of one of the two yearling wolves in the Lookout Mountain pack.

