

Purchase of Observer, Herald becomes final

By ANDREW CUTLER
STAFF WRITER

For the staffs of the *Baker City Herald* and *The Observer* in La Grande, Thursday's news that Bankruptcy Judge Trish M. Brown authorized the sale of the two papers to the EO Media Group was a chance to breathe a sigh of relief.

For the EO Media Group, the news continues the company's push to strengthen its position as a leading regional media presence.

"We're very pleased to have La Grande and Baker City as part of the EO Media Group. We're excited about the many possibilities this affords us in Eastern Oregon," said Heidi Wright, the EO Media Group chief operations officer.

"The purchase of these papers gives our company a greater ability to serve the region in a more effective way. This will grow EO Media Group's presence in Eastern Oregon from four newspapers to six."

On Monday the two new acquisitions officially joined the *East Oregonian*, *Hermiston Herald*, *Wallowa County Chieftain* and *Blue Mountain Eagle* as the EO Media Group's properties in Eastern Oregon.

"The joining together of these outstanding news and advertising operations, with four of them located along the I-84 corridor, will mean greater resources and opportunities for both local and regional news reporting. And that's a good thing for readers in all markets," EO Media Group Regional Publisher Chris Rush said.

Western Communications, which also owns the *Bend Bulletin*, filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection in January. The company first sought to restructure, then decided to liquidate its assets. This was



La Grande Observer Photo/Ronald Bond

The EO Media Group's purchase of *The Observer* and *Baker City Herald* from Western Communications was authorized Thursday. The sale became final July 1.

the second bankruptcy for Western Communications in the past 10 years. It emerged from another bankruptcy in 2012.

The Observer and *Baker City Herald* Publisher Karine Brogoitti said to finally reach this milestone was something she couldn't fathom a year ago.

"When things were their toughest or looked incredibly bleak, the thing that kept me, and everyone else, going was that commitment to what we do," she said.

"The pride and passion that these staffs have for their papers, their communities, their readers and their advertisers is something that I continue to be amazed at. It's that unyielding passion that got us through some incredibly stressful days," Brogoitti said.

Brogoitti said she believes there are brighter days ahead with new ownership in place and a renewed sense of optimism in both locations.

"Now, we get to reap the benefits of that hard work," she said. "The EO Media Group saw a smart and profitable investment and a dedicated, loyal staff."

According to court docu-

ments, the EO Media Group bought the two community newspapers from Western Communications for \$775,000.

Rush said EO Media Group is only buying the newspapers and business equipment, not the real estate in La Grande. The *Herald* is in a leased space in downtown Baker City. *The Observer* will likely be relocating from their current home on Fifth Street to new office space in La Grande sometime this summer.

Rush, who will add La Grande and Baker City to his role as regional publisher of the Eastern Oregon group, said for the near term there are no significant operational changes planned.

"The EO Media Group is hiring all current employees in both the La Grande and Baker City operations," he said. "Readers and advertisers will have the same printing, publishing and delivery schedule for both newspapers."

Brogoitti will remain in charge of day-to-day operations in both locations as the publisher.

The papers officially became part of the EO Media Group July 1.



Staff photo by Ben Lonergan

Hermiston School District librarian Delia Fields will travel to Greece this summer through an educational program at Portland State University's Center for Geography Education.

Hermiston School District librarian is headed to Greece

Delia Fields hopes trip will spark ideas

By JESSICA POLLARD
STAFF WRITER

From the cliff top monasteries of Meteora, to the narrow Gates of the Samariá Gorge on the island of Crete, one of Hermiston's own is going to see it all in Greece this month.

Delia Fields, the secondary school librarian at the Hermiston School District, has been selected to be part of a group of 14 educators from across Oregon for the trip, organized by Center for Geography Education in Oregon, based out of Portland State University.

The C-GEO works to "improve and sustain" geography education in Oregon. In addition to providing instructional materials and other resources, the organization has sent teachers on trips within Oregon, across the nation and to other countries.

"Their most basic point is you're more able to teach about a place when you've been there and you can share firsthand experience about it," Fields said.

Ancient Greece, sometimes known as the Cradle of Western Civilization, is a key component of world history. The educators will

be visiting Athens, Delphi, and Crete, where they will have the opportunity to take a local cooking class.

The C-GEO gave each of the program participants a handful of gifts to give out to people they meet during the trip as "goodwill gestures", including copies of an Oregon atlas.

Fields will be the only educator from the Eastern Oregon area to attend this trip, which was funded by the John and Betty Gray Geography Foundation, through the Oregon Community Foundation.

"We've been doing this for a few years now and it really has been impactful for teachers to have these opportunities to really learn geography education in the process of the trip," said Nancy Bales, executive director of the Gray Family Foundation.

Through the same program, Fields was able to visit the Appalachian region of the U.S. a few summers ago. She said the trip helped her create some of the most involved lesson plans she's ever designed.

All of the educators, Field included, will return to Oregon after 17 days to create different K-12 lesson plans, including ones which incorporate Oregon's geography with Greece's.

"This reaches the stu-

dents and the students' families. You've got to be literate in geography just to operate in our world," Fields said. "Just because it's important, regrettably, doesn't mean we can find the time for it. So you have to be creative."

Fields is working on imagining how Greek educators express the rich ancient culture of Greece to their students, and how those approaches might translate to regional history and geography.

"When kids go to Whiteman Mission and all there is is just some rubble, some outlines, they have to imagine Marcus and Narcissa's cabin," Fields said.

Participants will also be giving presentations on different regions of Greece during the trip. Fields will be presenting information on Delphi, which Ancient Greeks believed to be the center of the world.

For now, Fields is brushing up on her Greek and looking forward to viewing the Acropolis of Athens through her hotel window when the group makes their first stop in the Greek capital.

"Some of it looks like not much," Fields said of the ancient sites of Greece she will soon visit. "But I can only imagine what came before."

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