

EO Media Group acquires Bend Bulletin

By PHIL WRIGHT
EO Media Group

The auction lasted 15 minutes Monday and ended with EO Media Group buying the Bend Bulletin.

The \$3.65 million winning bid also covered the price for the Bulletin's sister weekly, the Redmond Spokesman.

EO Media Group beat two out-of-state competitors, Adams Publishing Group out of Greeneville, Tennessee, and Rhode Island Suburban Newspapers Inc., which did not send a representative to the auction in Portland but made almost \$68,000 on the sale.

Heidi Wright, EO Media Group's chief operating officer, said the company appreciates the opportunity to continue Oregon ownership of The Bulletin and Redmond Spokesman.

"It's reassuring for the future of community newspapers when a small independent company like EO Media Group can prevail, even when going up against the big companies that are buying up newspapers nonstop around the country," she said.

Western Communications, the Bulletin's parent company, filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection in January and is selling all of its assets. EO Media Group bought two of those assets in June at auction — The Observer in La Grande and the Baker City Herald. The Bulletin and Spokesman acquisitions bring the company's total number of

newspapers and journals to 14, including the Seaside Signal.

Wright explained why the purchases make sense for the family-owned business.

"First, the vibrant economy of Central Oregon, coupled with a fresh start for The Bulletin and Redmond Spokesman, bodes well for the future of these newspapers," she said. "Second, we believe readers in Central Oregon will support our mission of producing content that is relevant, credible and reflective of the communities we serve."

Kathryn B. Brown, vice president of EO Media Group, credited Bend locals for support.

"We appreciate the assistance of so many in the Bend community who encouraged us to consider the acquisition of The Bulletin and the Redmond Spokesman, and who were willing to support us in our efforts," she said. "It quickly became clear to our board that these newspapers are an excellent investment for our company, and are a good fit with our operations throughout Oregon."

Bend Mayor Sally Russell, in a letter, expressed her personal support for EO Media Group to prevail.

"Balanced, factual, local reporting is invaluable for the healthy community I am committed to helping grow and thrive," she said. "I believe that among the bidders that have identified, EOMG is the only one that offers the local perspective I feel is so critical. Our city would not be well-served by having our local, daily



The Bend Bulletin and headquarters of Western Communications.

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Heidi Wright, EO Media Group's chief operating officer

newspaper controlled by absentee managers of huge conglomerates whose only commitment to our city is financial."

Some Bend supporters provided financial backing, including The Bend Foundation. Trustee Mike Hollem, said the nonprofit views this as a worthy investment in a company with a long history in Oregon delivering valuable news.

"That's a really important part of the whole American dream to have an unbiased local press," he said.

He said he could not speak for other investors, but the Bend Foundation

does not have an editorial stake in this action.

Steve Forrester, EO Media Group president and CEO, said the purchase marks more than the beginning of a new publishing venture.

"For our family ownership, acquisition of the Bend Bulletin also carries emotional and historical meaning," he said. "The friendship between the Chandler family and the Forrester-Bedford-Brown families goes back more than 50 years. Our essential challenge is to bring new life to Bend's storied daily newspaper."

Adams owns more than a hundred small dailies, weeklies and shoppers, including the Herald & News in Klamath Falls and the Lake County Examiner in Lakeview.

Emily Cureton, with Oregon Public Broadcasting, reported Rhode Island Suburban Newspapers Inc., or RISN, owns newspapers in Rhode Island, Arizona and California, and dozens of the businesses use the same address on regulatory paperwork — an office suite in a strip mall in rural Illinois.

Corporate filings show the humble office space is connected to Horizon Publications, a subsidiary of bankrupt conglomerate Hollinger Inc., once one of the largest media companies in the world. Hollinger became infamous in the mid-2000s for the scale and scope of theft committed by its executives, according to Oregon Public Broadcasting. An investigation on behalf of shareholders and submitted to the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission found Hollinger executives siphoned more than \$400 million from their companies, largely by collecting fees on bogus noncompete contracts.

That led to fraud convictions in 2007 for Hollinger leaders Conrad Black and F. David Radler. A key Hollinger executive implicated in some of the transactions, Roland McBride, is the vice president of RISN.

According to court documents, RISN negotiated a \$67,500 "break-up fee"

with Western Communications to induce RISN to submit a bid within a certain time frame, and RISN as the first bidder "acted as a catalyst or 'stalking horse' to attract higher and better offers" for the Bend newspaper and thus deserves payment for maximizing the sale. The sale proceeds will cover the cost of the fee.

The bidding started with the EO Media Group's \$2.5 million. Wright helmed the company's bidding against Mark Adams, president and CEO of Adams Publishing. RISN sent no one to the auction.

Brown said most of the bids went up in \$50,000 increments, and at \$3.65 million Adams was out and told the EO team congratulations. U.S. Bankruptcy Court Judge Trish Brown approved the sale during a hearing following the auction. She also gave until Aug. 12 for unsecured creditors to oppose RISN's break-up fee. If no one comes forward, the company collects the money.

The purchase includes the printing press and equipment in Bend but not the building or property. Kathryn Brown said EO Media would lease the site for the time being and look for new space. She also said EO Media will look at how to fold the Central Oregon papers into the organization and soon will reach out to the employees at the Bulletin and Spokesman.

Kathryn Brown said they aim to close the deal by the end of August.

Seaside: a resort and tourism destination from the start

Now that summer has absolutely settled — the streets just shy of too full to be useful, sand piling up in all corners of our cars, and something of a tan building into the skin — it's high time for Seaside residents (yes, you read that right) to stop by the Visitors Bureau to enrich the "staycation" that is our lives during off-work and weekend moments in the busy tourism months.

And why not? Thanks to Pam Fleming and company at Nature's Helper landscaping, the grounds here at 101 and Broadway have never looked better. Over the last few months, I've watched the flowers bloom and the greenery thrive in equal measure as the number of daily visitors has picked up. I'm sure most of them don't even realize the pillars, the tower, and the trim of the Visitors Bureau and Chamber building were repainted this month and

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JOSHUA HEINEMAN



a new stone walking path installed through the hedge to the oversized Adirondack chair. They only see the loveliness of it all, as they should.

Come in and pick up a copy of our newest handout for a self-directed walking tour of Seaside's pocket gardens. There are eight stops highlighted along the way from the Visitors Bureau to the Seaview Garden at the Turn-around, including spots by Beach Books, Dooger's, Pig 'N Pancake, and Phillips Candies. Each stop a unique collection of beautiful plants and plays-on-words from the mind of Fleming, who has designed and maintained these

in-between spaces for 25 years now.

If you were a fan of last year's illustrated Travel Oregon campaign with giant bunnies and sky ships, you'll be equally pleased with the refresh this summer featuring walking clouds and a sentient Proposal Rock. We've got a new stock of posters, postcards, and stickers for you and your drop-in visitors this season.

You know what else? We've got a collection of information on destinations across the entire state of Oregon. Planning a trip to Bend? We've got you covered. Looking to hit up some parks this summer? There's a guide for that. Headed elsewhere on the Oregon Coast? NOT ALLOWED. Just kidding, we stock lots of information on coastal goodies to explore from Astoria all the way down to Brookings.

Might also be a good time to take stock of what you have here.

Seaside is truly an authentic destination through and through. Unlike most cities in the West, there never was a timber-dependent or fisheries-based economy in Seaside. We've been a resort and tourism destination from the start.

I was looking at archival images from the Oregon Historical Society recently and found some of Seaside at the turn of the last century, some 120 years ago. There were teens splashing and jumping in the waterline, parents walking hand-in-hand with little children on the beach, people napping on blankets under wind breaks, postcards and trinkets for sale, hot dogs, candy, and even sand sculptures. Essentially, it was Seaside. Completely recognizable.

The reach is further than you might imagine. I was in Boise over the Fourth of July holiday for a family reunion on my wife's side of the family. I couldn't

believe how many people from this far-flung group had been to Seaside in their lives and how their memorable stories came flowing out as soon as I mentioned my work here.

Last year at this time, too, we were telling our then-neighbors in Portland that we were moving out to the North Coast and, again, I was overwhelmed with stories of families having come out to Seaside every year, for generations in some cases. It was profoundly moving.

And we can all be proud to be part of that long string from the past and to carry these experiences forward. A visit to the Visitors Bureau is an easy way to remind yourself how lucky we are to live amongst such beauty and tradition.

Got a tourism-related comment or question? I'd love to hear from you. Write me at jheineman@cityofseaside.us.

Cooking tuna, telescopes to the stars and much more at library

August at the Seaside Public Library is going to be chock full of activities and events to keep you busy and entertained with summer fun at the library.

We are planning a stargazing party for all ages at 9 p.m. on Friday, Aug. 2, in the library parking lot to tie in with our summer reading theme, "A Universe of Stories."

Bring your telescope or share one of ours. After the event, come back and check out our full size table top telescope from the library to view the night sky at home. It even comes in its own carrying bag. We have lots of other unique items to check out from the library including cultural passes, Wi-Fi hot spots, bike locks, kindles, and electricity kill-a-watt monitoring kits.

Summer reading is in full swing with over 200 kids and over 50 teens signed up and participating at the library. Kids, teens, and adults can turn in reading logs all month through Aug. 31. Turn in summer reading logs to get a prize and celebrate achieving your reading goals. For kids and teens, turning in reading logs gets your name in the countywide grand prize drawing. Grand prizes include book baskets, LEGOS, stomp rockets, wireless speakers, instant cameras, and for teens, a chance to win a \$100 cash prize for reading all summer long, sponsored by TLC, a division of Fibre Federal

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Teens will have one last summer reading event on Tuesday, Aug. 6, with giant games, music, and an ice cream summer reading wrap party.

Preschool Storytime continues all month with weekly Wednesday, 10 a.m. bilingual storytimes in English and Spanish. We will also be hosting a wind science bilingual family program. The Leap Into Science program Engineered by the Franklin Institute will be on Tuesday, Aug. 13 from 2 to 4 p.m..

For adults, Saturday on August 10 there will be a documentary film festival with Ron Walker, at 1 p.m. The monthly adult trivia tournament will be held on Wednesday, Aug. 14, at 6 p.m. We are bringing back two favorites: an evening of classical guitar with local guitarist Wes Wahrmond on Thursday, Aug. 22, at 7 p.m. We will also be hosting another favorite, antique jewelry appraisal with certified gemologist Danuta Hackett on Saturday, Aug. 24, at 1 p.m.

Finally, if you want to learn more about cooking tuna, sign up for our albacore cooking class with Jennifer Burns Bright on Saturday, Aug. 31, at 1 p.m. Space



For their Pacifica Project, teens Emma Ruff and Friday Meyer developed all this year's library summer reading events and teen programs plus a star party and one Storytime puppet show. Picture shows prepping a fruit rocket for teen space food program.

is limited for cooking classes so we do require signing up either by calling or stopping by the front desk of the library. All events are

held at the library during library open hours.

Our "Love Your Library" celebration week this year will be



Seaside Public Library Constellation crafts at summer reading event.

held on Sept. 10 through Sept. 15. This is a great week to come in to the library and join us in recognizing all the ways you use and love your public library. We will have give aways and special events all focused on the Library and the Friends of the Library this year. Friends also save the dates for when The Friends of the Seaside Library are having a fall book sale. Sept. 10 through Sept. 15 the book sale will be held all week long during the library's open hours. Look for the sale in the main area of the library.