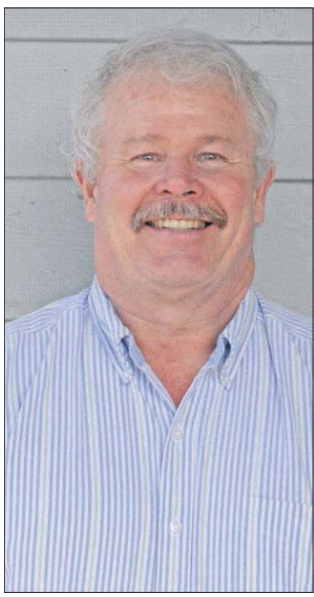


# Wellness Center provides mental health services and employment



Steve Tool/Chieftain

**Randy Morgan, director of the Wallowa Valley Chorale, is looking forward to the March 8 concert at the Lostine Presbyterian Church.**

## Chorale gears up for eclectic concert

By Steve Tool  
Wallowa Valley Chieftain

The Wallowa Valley Chorale is scheduled to perform Sunday, March 8, at 4 p.m. at the Lostine Presbyterian Church and conductor Randy Morgan said he expected a great performance from the longtime vocal group.

"The chorale was already going strong when I moved here in the 70s. I became very active in it in the early 2000s," Morgan said.

The upcoming concert features a solo performance by Stephen Kliewer on the song "Thy Will be Done." Morgan said the song is dedicated to chorale member Joyce Terry, who recently passed away. Joseph postmaster Denny Kolb is also slated for a solo.

The chorale does not specialize in any particular genre of music. "We try not to limit our performances to sacred music or popular music. We try and use an eclectic approach where we have a good variety of music," Morgan said.

The chorale receives strong community support, according to Morgan. "In fact, we could do a better job of advertising ourselves. It's just a big job to do everything you need to do to get the maximum amount of people to come and see you," Morgan said.

The program for the performance features sacred music, pop music, including a '50s medley and a reworking of "The Lion Sleeps Tonight." The performance also includes a selection from the movie "The Sound of Music," Handel's "Praise the Lord" and other selections.

Morgan said he picked out the music for the last two performances. "What I'd like to do, is get the members together to talk about music and what we'd like to do and go from there. That way, everyone has input," Morgan said.

Morgan said the 25-member chorale started practicing for the upcoming performance in January. "It's a fluid membership because all of our members are busy, and sometimes things are going on where members can't sing this season with us, but can sing for next fall. We try to put on one concert for the fall and one in the spring," Morgan said.

People interested in joining the chorale can contact any of the members or Morgan himself at 541-426-3593. "This chorale is a true team effort. Some people help with public relations, getting posters or rehearsal venues. One person can't do it all," Morgan said.

The Lostine Presbyterian Church is located at 132 Hwy 82 in Lostine.

By Steve Tool  
Wallowa County Chieftain

Wallowa County's wildly swinging employment levels and lack of an employment office make tough work for job seekers. Adding mental illness to the mix can make job-seeking a real uphill battle. Wallowa Valley Center for Wellness employment specialist Lem McBurney helps those struggling with mental illness to find meaningful employment.

"What we do here is try to help people who need mental health services. My category is called supported employment, which is a Dartmouth-supported program. We wrap around people to help them find employment that suits them," McBurney said.

The program helps clients find jobs they want to perform, he added. "We help them find those jobs, and we help them keep those jobs. The kind of people we're helping are your friends, neighbors and relatives. I have people with master's degrees and people who have lived all over the world," McBurney said.

Client challenges range from developmental disabilities to post-traumatic stress disorder. Anyone who receives services from the center is eligible for the program. The program's success rate is approximately one in three. "We look at success as both getting and keeping a job. ... It's a cool program, and until I worked it for a year, I didn't realize how it changed people's lives," McBurney said.

Employment helps people feel valuable and enriches their lives, according to McBurney. "I've had people who didn't know if they wanted to live until tomorrow decide that they have value. It's not something I create, it's something they create," McBurney said.

Clients can feel like they've lost control. Gainful employment can restore a feeling of control. "You can get your hopes and dreams back. These are things you can lose when you don't understand what's happening. The stability you can regain with employment helps with recovery," McBurney said.

The program follows a strict set of guidelines set by the state and the Dartmouth program. State oversight includes sending out reviewers who check the financial books along with how and to whom the program offers services. "The tenets of supported employment are supports offered for an unlimited time afterwards, and



Lem McBurney is employment specialist with the Wellness Center, which serves clients dealing with mental health challenges.

services are offered to everyone, not just people I think are ready," McBurney said.

Many employers in Wallowa County do not need full-time employees, McBurney said. "The beauty of this program is that we have people who are willing and happy to work one or two days a week — or even full-time. We find jobs suited for those people, and employers are happy because they have someone with benefits who can work maybe one day in two weeks," McBurney said.

Whether it's the biggest or smallest job, people who face developmental or mental health challenges often have a strong work ethic because having a job is so important to their recovery, McBurney says. "Their work ethic is often greater than someone who's just looking for the next big thing. I have someone who holds what some might describe as a very menial job, but they do that job like it's the most important job in the world. They're proud of it, and it's an important part of their life."

The program uses as many state resources as possible, including vocational rehabilitation and Worksource Oregon in both training and employment. Since the shutdown of the employment office in Enterprise, McBurney occasionally ferries clients to La Grande to utilize employment services at that office.

Because of inter-county relationships, clients also have the option to relocate to Union or Baker counties. "If we can help them get to another place where they want to work or live, we will help them seek work there and hand them

over to our counterparts there to continue the support," McBurney said.

The program does not attempt to place people in jobs unsuited to their skills. "I'm there for the employer and for my people. I'm held accountable too," McBurney said.

The program avoids seeking charitable jobs because it doesn't view charitable jobs as qualifying jobs. "We can help people find regular jobs for regular things," McBurney said.

The people who run the center deserve much credit, according to McBurney. "The level of care people receive here is an example throughout the state, and it's all because of people like Stephen Kliewer, Bridget Brown, Chantay Jett and Stephanie Williams. Their professional and per-

sonal standards are remarkable."

As for McBurney, he appreciates the role he plays in helping his people find

meaningful jobs. "I'm someone in their corner saying 'You can,' when they live in a world of 'You can't,'" McBurney said.

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### ATHLETE OF THE WEEK



**COLE GOMES**

A seventh grade archer from Enterprise Middle School, Cole Gomes, has been named Athlete of the Week for honors recently won competing at the Oregon Bowhunters State

Indoor Archery Championships, held in Bend. Having worked with a bow and arrow for merely two years, the self-taught marksman placed second in the 12-14 age group's Youth Male Bowhunter Freestyle Division.

The 13-year-old son of Ed and Julie Gomes tallied 511 points among a perfect score of 600. This past fall, Gomes bagged his first buck with a bow and arrow. Having played soccer since he was in kindergarten, Gomes is a "fanatical" soccer player and plans to turn out for track this spring. He maintains a 3.72 GPA and raises pigs.

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