

OSU Extension Service works to meet community needs

From hay probes to nutrition education, Extension Service offices offer resources

By Ann Bloom
For the Wallowa County Chieftain

ENTERPRISE — Housed in a rather nondescript white building off the Lewiston Highway is a place where residents of Wallowa County can get items they can't get anywhere else in the county — the Oregon State University Extension Service.

Do you need your pressure canner tested? The OSU Extension Service will do it for you, explain the process and what the readings mean, all for free.

Are you making pie filling and don't have Clear Jel (a thickener)? The Extension Service will sell you a pound for just \$3.

Need a hay probe to test the nutritional quality of your hay? The Extension Service will loan one free of charge.

Is there a bug making a nightly dinner out of your lettuce? The Extension Service may be able to tell you what it is and how to eliminate it.

"We're a conduit for information and resources. We may not provide the

service, but we can provide the information on the resources (for a service). We provide a lot of resource material," said Pete Schreder, OSU Extension Service Natural Resources Agent. "Our uniqueness is that we have so many resources at our disposal." Schreder said sometimes the connection to information, or answers is provided through publications available in the office or connecting the person with the appropriate person who can help them.

The Extension Service also is home to the 4-H program, which works with trained volunteers to provide club-based opportunities for approximately 200 youths in addition to in-school programs.

"The 4-H program is a huge resource in the community," said Debi Warnock, 4-H/family, community health agent. "We loan out resources to schools and other education based groups."

Resources include animal science learning labs, grain grinders for



Bill Bradshaw/Wallowa County Chieftain

Debi Warnock with the Wallowa County Extension Service tests an older pressure canner Wednesday, Oct. 21, 2020, at the Oregon State University Extension Office in Enterprise. She determined the gauge needed replacing. To schedule an appointment to test a canner at the office, call 541-426-3143.

class demonstrations and for events, egg incubators and sewing machines. The 4-H program also has helped the community during the COVID-19 pandemic through its Junior Outreach Program by providing packets to more than 100 families with children's activities, recipes and information on food, nutrition and children's activities.

Jill Huffman is the face of the Extension Service office. She is the office manager and keeps track of which equipment the ser-

vice loaned out, when and to whom. She also maintains the customer service level at the office, answering questions and fielding others to the appropriate resource or person best able to help.

There are some things the Extension Service cannot help with. For example, the office does not have an onsite entomologist — a person who identifies insects. For that, the Extension Service has "the university behind us," Schreder said.

If someone brings in an insect and wants to know what it is, the Extension Service can send it to the main OSU campus in Corvallis for identification. The Extension Service, for liability reasons, does not identify mushrooms or spiders.

The Extension Service also relies on regional support for some of its programs. John Panches, forestry agent, provides forestry support for Wallowa County, but is based in Union County. Darrin Walenta, also based in Union County, provides support for Wallowa County in the area of crops and soils.

"It's a solution to not having a forestry agent in house," Schreder said. "We still have access to someone who serves Wallowa and Baker and Union."

The Extension Service also can help with decision making. For example, the Extension Service can loan out a solar water trough.

Someone could borrow it to see if it meets their needs and then build something similar if they decided it would work for them, he said.

Wallowa County's nutri-

tion education program is also administered through the Extension Service. A trained nutrition educator provides age-appropriate nutrition curriculum to elementary school students in the county. Nutrition information is available through printed material available in the Extension Service office or on www.foodhero.org, the university's website for nutrition information and recipes.

Online food-preservation classes are available through the Extension Service, as well as material on gardening, classes on fitness for people with arthritis, babysitting and others.

Each county in the state has an Extension Service office. The mission of the Extension Service, a function of the land-grant university system, which includes OSU, is to bring information to Oregon's residents. Not all counties offer the same services that Wallowa County does. Counties generally focus on the needs of their communities and the crops and products that region grows.

— Ann Bloom is the Nutrition Education Program assistant at the Wallowa County Extension Service

BURNS

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fairly widespread area in the vicinity of Medical Springs. Johnson said that, in burning a almost 800 acre section near Big Creek, they were continuing forest management efforts that span a decade.

"This burn that we did (the first week of November), it was to keep the surface fuel levels down — the limbs and the needles that have been dropping... and then there were a bunch of young white fir starting to come back up underneath the overstory of ponderosa pine and doug fir in there," Johnson said. "We wanted to kill that out before it got too big in there, and we met all those goals with that burn."



U.S. Forest Service/Contributed Photo

Surface fuels burn in a stand of timber near Big Creek, part of the prescribed burn the U.S. Forest Service conducted in early November 2020 in the Bald Angel management unit on the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest.

Johnson stressed the goal of any prescribed burn is not to rid an area of burnable fuels but rather that burning was one tool

among many to promote healthy forests, which are less prone to out-of-control crown fires. He pointed to the Bald

Angel unit as an example of how forest management was a multifaceted process that takes place over a long timeframe.

"For us, burning is just one tool in the drawer," Johnson said. "I think a lot of time, people think that burning is gonna fix forest health issues. In most places, that's not true... burning's just one of them. Pre-commercial thinning, timber harvest, planting, all these other things are all part of it too."

While the Forest Service had hoped to conduct more prescribed burns this fall, the window to do so has now closed, and they'll have to wait until spring to break out the drip torches again.

When they do, Johnson said they hope to get to some of the units in the Hilgard/Spring Creek area, which includes the Bird Track and Limber Jim units. Air quality concerns for the Grande Ronde Valley and personnel hindrances resulting from the

ongoing COVID-19 pandemic prevented the Forest Service from burning the upwind area.

"We always have thousands and thousands of acres we'd like to get done, like this year, this fall season, we're gonna end up with like 800 acres when I wish we had several thousand acres done," Johnson said. "You're just limited on the weather windows, and then smoke management's always just a part of that."



Dick Mason/The Observer

Jack Johnson, right, talks with his Cove neighbor Wally Rudd, a Navy veteran, after receiving the James M. Roche Spirit of Volunteerism Award for his service with the Employer Support of the National Guard and Reserve.

HONOR

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3-116th's initial battalion was based in Union.

Maj. Jorge Deanda of the 3-116th said on Sunday that Johnson has an intuitive understanding of the issues members of the National Guard unit must deal with as they balance civilian careers with military service.

"He's a soldier's advocate," Deanda said.

He noted that to help employers understand the challenges their employees in the National Guard face, he arranges for them to attend some of their training sessions each year. "He is the point man for this," Deanda said. "He directs everything."

He also said Johnson is an excellent person for ironing out differences between employers and National Guardsmen because he has experienced the same challenges.

"He understands what soldiers are going through," Deanda said.

Lt. Col. Seth Musgrove, commander of the 3-116th, said Johnson's generous nature serves him well as a ESGR volunteer.

"He's very caring and empathetic. He's also selfless with the time he volunteers," Musgrove said.

Johnson has no plans to cut back on volunteering.

"Efforts by volunteers are important to make anything work," he said.

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