



Wallowa County Chieftain, File

Wallowa High School Principal and coach David Howe offers advice to basketball player Kyla Hook in February 2020.

## HOWE

Continued from Page A1

the ability to compete in Future Business Leaders of America at the regional and state level.”

The last thing Howe said he was particularly proud of was the increase in test scores from when he arrived until now. Most scores on state and PSAT tests are among the best in the county, state and nation.

He attributed this success to “the dedicated staff who routinely go above and beyond to help students succeed,” he said. “They are miracle workers.”

Howe said later that his Christian faith is critical to his direction in life.

“I know that several of your readers do not believe in our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, but I do,” he told the Chieftain. “He brought me here and I continue to lean on his will for my life. No, I’m not perfect, never will be. He is still working on me.”

Howe concluded his resignation letter with a paraphrase from the movie “Hoosiers.”

“I’ve made some mistakes but they’re mistakes I take full responsibility for,” Howe wrote. “I was hired to be the principal of Wallowa High School and I’ve done that to the best of my ability. I apologize for nothing. You may not be pleased with the results but I am. I am very proud of the high school staff and students.”

## Violence

Violence also has raised its ugly head, according to Howe’s letter.

“Students have threatened my life by shooting me or stabbing me,” Howe wrote in his letter. “As a result, I have anxiety about getting in my vehicle after dark. I wonder is there someone waiting to stab or shoot me? I have nightmares about someone standing in my bedroom doorway with a gun. So violent that it wakes my wife up — I have never had nightmares. The final straw is when I came home

from the December board meeting and started yelling at my wife in response to a simple question.”

During the interview, he also concluded, “Basically, in my mind, stuff rolls downhill.”

## Responses?

Superintendent Tammy Jones said she couldn’t release the contents of the resignation letter and wouldn’t comment on it. Howe did, however, provide a copy to the Chieftain.

“It included names of people that wouldn’t be legal according to our attorney,” Jones said. “It

would violate our board policy on complaints.”

She deferred a request for a copy of the letter to board

Chairman Woody Wolfe, who deferred the request back to Jones. Board member Matt Howard, who Howe also mentioned in his resignation letter, was unavailable for comment.

Jones did speak highly of Howe to the Chieftain.

“He loves Wallowa and there isn’t a harder worker,” she said. “He’s passionate about Wallowa and the kids.”

She said his resignation comes amid those of others who are retiring or have decided to leave for other reasons, such as the pressures of mandates related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

## Others depart

Howe’s departure is not the first among Wallowa County school administrators in the past six months.

Enterprise School Superintendent and Elementary School Principal Erika Pinkerton left her post Aug. 30 for a position in La Grande. Sherri Kilgore, Joseph High School principal, left earlier last summer for an elementary school principal’s job in Pendleton. Enterprise High School Principal Blake Carlsen resigned Oct. 11, to be effective at the end of 2021. Carlsen would not comment on his reason for leaving or future plans.



Jones

# Hatchet proves valuable for stranded hunters

By JAYSON JACOBY  
Baker City Herald

BAKER CITY — With his feet freezing and the prospect of a long and snowy winter night ahead with a bloody elk hide the only shelter, Noah Chaney was never so glad to hear the rumble of a boat motor.

Although his affinity for his brother’s new hatchet was, if anything, greater still.

Noah, 20, along with his older brother, Neil Chaney Jr., 22 (who goes by John), and Noah’s best friend, Isaac Logan, 20, were in quite a predicament as the sun went down on Sunday, Jan. 30, at the eastern edge of Baker County.

The trio had started the day hoping to fill their elk tags in the steep country above Brownlee Reservoir, several miles southeast of Richland.

Isaac killed a big cow around 9:30 a.m.

The friends, along with the Chaney’s dad, Neil Sr., 43, of Baker City, came up with a plan. They were too far below their rigs to haul 400 pounds or so of elk meat up the precipitous, snow-covered slopes.

Better, they figured, to take advantage of gravity to ease their burden. Neil Sr. agreed to hike to the ridge, drive back to Baker City and haul the family’s boat. He’d meet the trio on the shore, more than 1,000 feet below. He left around 11:30 a.m.

Before they started down to the water, Noah,

John and Isaac managed to kindle a fire that they used to cook some flank steak from the elk — probably the freshest meat any of them had ever enjoyed. But they didn’t have a lighter or even matches to get a blaze going on the cold and blustery January day.

They had a hatchet. And a chunk of flint that came with it. The hatchet, Noah said, was a gift this past Christmas to John from their sister, Abigail. They were able to coax enough sparks from the flint to catch some dry tinder.

“It’s difficult,” was Noah’s succinct description of starting a fire the old-fashioned way, with no assistance from butane or some other petroleum accelerant.

Noah, a student at Eastern Oregon University, La Grande, John, who lives in Eugene, and Isaac, who’s from Prineville, wrapped the elk hide around the meat and maneuvered it, which is to say rolled it as best they could, down through the sage and the rock outcrops, to Brownlee.

They arrived at water’s edge around 1:30 p.m., Noah said.

When they got to the river they sparked a second blaze to warm their frigid feet while they waited for the elder Chaney to arrive by boat.

Noah said his dad had figured he could get there by about 3 p.m., so it ought not be a long wait.

But 3 p.m. passed. And then 4 p.m.

“We were sitting, waiting, hoping that we would hear a boat eventually,” Noah said.

At the farthest edge of Oregon, at the bottom of a canyon more than 2,000 feet deep, the dark came fast. The temperature dropped. The wind rose.

They found an old dead tree near a decrepit cabin.

They hauled the tree to their makeshift camp on the rocky shore and used the hatchet to chop a pile of firewood. Then they sliced some backstrap from the elk and had another meal.

By this point, Noah said, the group concluded that their dad wasn’t going to show up with the boat. They hunkered down for what they expected would be a chilly and unpleasant night. But first they retrieved the elk hide.

They came up with a schedule — one would wrap up in the hide and try to sleep for an hour while the two others stayed close to the fire. They’d swap the hide every hour. It was about 9:55 p.m. when John said he heard an engine and they saw a white glow.

It was the light bar on a Baker County Sheriff’s Office boat. Inside the vessel were Sheriff Travis Ash and Marine Deputy Wayne Paxton.

They had braved 8 miles of icy whitecaps and blowing snow from the boat ramp at Moonshine Mine Park near Swede’s Landing on Brownlee.

“Thank goodness,” was Noah’s reaction. “It was so

nice to see.”

Neil Sr. had brought his boat from Baker City. But it wouldn’t start, said Frances Chaney, Neil Sr.’s wife and Noah and John’s mother. Knowing the trio of hunters was waiting to be picked up by boat, the Chaney’s got word to Ash by phone at 6:39 p.m.

Ash said that after hearing the couple’s story, and knowing that a snowstorm was moving in, he decided that a rescue operation couldn’t wait for the morning. He and Paxton brought the boat to Moonshine Mine Park.

Another group of search and rescue volunteers was on standby in case the trio had hiked back up the mountain rather than wait on the shore.

Ash said the boat trip on the black water was one of the more harrowing in his experience.

Brownlee is about 32 feet below full, and at that level rocks, normally well below the surface, pose a danger to boats, Ash said.

“We were running at about 7 mph,” he said.

They were able to establish a GPS track to follow back to the park, so they could run a bit faster on the return.

The Chaney’s were reunited around midnight.

Noah said he is grateful not only for the rescue, but also for that hatchet and the flint that not only kept the trio somewhat warm, but also kept their stomachs satisfied with flame-cooked venison.

## ELK

Continued from Page A1

intestines, so an elk can starve to death with a belly full of alfalfa.

## ‘Elk curtains’

At the Northwest Hay Expo in Kennewick, Washington, mostly men, mostly unmasked, roam around the great hall, slapping hands and checking

out the latest in twine, balers and tarping technology. Pamphlets, ball caps and squishy stress-balls shaped like little tractors litter vendors’ tables.

A vendor motions to a passing farmer, “Hi, ya, how you? Enjoying your day so far?”

Clint Vieu is from Walla Walla. He’s with a major tarping services company called ITC Ser-

vices out of Moses Lake, Washington. He says one solution for growers is to install “elk curtains,” which are tarps covering the sides of big stacks. Left unprotected, Vieu says, “Stacks have fallen on elk ‘cause they’ll eat into it so much that it will actually destabilize the stack and it will collapse and fall in on the animals.”

## ‘It’s life’

Every year, elk bust up Anthony Leggett’s fences to get to his hay and crops. And every year, he fixes them again.

Still, Leggett has made his peace with the elk.

“We just happen to live in a spot where there’s a trail that they come down on,” he says. “For us, it’s life.”

## AUCTION

Continued from Page A1

meals program, a youth group and a food bank for those in need.

The online portion of the upcoming auction will start in about two weeks, said Donna Beverage, a member of the Friends of the Historic Union Community Hall’s board. Information on participating in the online auction will be available on the Catherine Creek Community Center’s Facebook page or by calling 541-562-2038.

People who want to participate in person instead of online can do so on the final day of the auction, Saturday, Feb. 26, when all the auction items will be displayed at the Catherine Creek Community Center, 667 N. Main St. People coming to the center that day will be able to submit their bids in writing.

Donations for the auction are still being accepted. For information on donating items, go to Catherine Creek Community Center’s Facebook page or send an email to cccc667@gmail.com.

## Mobile Service

# Outstanding Computer Repair



**Fast & Reliable**  
**Call or Text 24/7**  
**Dale Bogardus 541-297-5831**

Stay up-to-date with Microsoft’s most advanced operating system to date,  
**Windows 11**  
Desktops and laptops in stock  
Or upgrade yours today for the best security!

**House calls (let me come to you!)**  
**Drop Offs & Remote Services are Available**

All credit cards accepted    

# IT’S IN YOUR INBOX

## before your mailbox

Subscribers can receive daily email updates and uninterrupted digital delivery on a computer, tablet and smartphone



## Sign up for free digital access



Call 800-781-3214  
LaGrandeObserver.com