

Round-Up food vendors say business is slow going so far

By **BRYCE DOLE**
East Oregonian

PENDLETON — The smells of grilling meats and delicious treats are filling the streets of downtown Pendleton now that dozens of food vendors and trucks have arrived for the Pendleton Round-Up.

People meandered South Main Street on Wednesday, Sept. 15, to see what's cooking and to check out the many artisans the Round-Up attracts every year. But at least five vendors said the crowd was underwhelming and hoped business would pick up heading into the weekend.

"It's not as big as we'd hoped," said Diana Howe, a worker at Sangers Gourmet Hamburgers with Caramelized Onions out of La Grande. "Hopefully it gets busier."

Vendors had different opinions about the lack of a crowd. Some said people might not have been aware the Round-Up was happening this year after its cancellation in 2020. Others said it was too early in the week, that people were just arriving and most people may just be down at the rodeo.

But Lua Sepeni, co-owner of Polynesian Grill food truck out of Hermiston, expressed why she thought business was slow: COVID-19. "COVID," she said. "I think so."

Several vendors said bringing their business to the Main Street Show was more important this year than ever before. After a year where events were canceled, staff and supplies were short and prices were high, vendors were primed and ready to dish out their best and rake in cash.

"As long as we make our money back, we'll make it work," said Angel Black, co-owner of H&H BBQ out of Forest Grove.

Like several other vendors, Black said getting inventory for this week's festivities was a struggle. She's had to drive long distances and pay extra for supplies. She also said business has been slow to get going this week.

"I think a lot of people are just afraid," Black said. "We've always stepped out on faith."

Jeffrey Violet, the owner of Sangers, said the price of food for his already-expensive burgers have spiked recently. That, Violet said, makes it more important for him to come to events with many customers — to break even.

Vendors now are looking toward the weekend with hopes business will



Fitu Sepeni grills chicken Wednesday, Sept. 15, 2021, at the Polynesian Grill food truck at the Main Street Show in downtown Pendleton while his daughter, Tuta, watches. For the many vendors that line South Main Street during the Pendleton Round-Up, business was slow to start. Several pointed to the pandemic as a possible cause.

Bryce Dole/East Oregonian

boom. Regardless, the vendors said they were thrilled to be back at the Round-Up after a year off.

Sepeni, of Polynesian Grill, spent the day cooking alongside her daughter, Tuta. She learned her famous barbecue recipes from her aunt, Maima Peterson, who died this year, she said. Now, she was glad to be handing down the recipe to her daughter and showing her the values of hard work and commitment.

"You're going to have to learn no matter what," Sepeni said. "And you'll remember the lessons you learned."

Black also spent her day working

alongside her family at their barbecue joint. Her father, who took the reins at the business after his father started it in Las Vegas in the 1950s, stood at the street corner, watching the family dish out brisket, ribs, cornbread, catfish, pulled pork and their famous mac and cheese. Black calls it their "cheesy dope."

To Deron Johnson, a chef who has worked for the family for decades, food is a way to share experiences and connect with new people in new places.

"I just love doing it," he said of cooking, "And I love my family."

LOCAL BRIEFING

Crash injures two Round-Up contestants, kills one

UMATILLA COUNTY — A crash Thursday night, Sept. 16, injured two Pendleton Round-Up contestants and killed another.

Oregon State Police reported the crash occurred at about 8:15 p.m. on the eastbound side of Interstate 84 near milepost 193 where a Volkswagen Jetta ran into the rear of a potato truck.

Jate Frost, 20 of Randlett, Utah, was driving the Jetta east with passengers Richard Schleicher, 24, of Stockton, Oklahoma, and Jesse Hopper, 21, of Magnum, Oklahoma. Ediberto Ramirez Carrillo, 31, of Hermiston, was driving the commercial vehicle hauling potatoes.

The Jetta rear ended the truck, and Frost suffered serious injuries. An emergency helicopter flew him to Kadlec Regional Medical Center in Richland, Washington.

Hopper was in the rear seat and also suffered serious injuries. He was transported to Oregon Health & Science University Hospital, Portland.

OSP reported Schleicher

was in the front passenger seat and suffered fatal injuries.

Carrillo was not injured. All three occupants of the Jetta were contestants at the Pendleton Round-up, according to Oregon State Police.

Wolves injure one calf, kill another in Umatilla County

UMATILLA COUNTY — The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife reported wolves in late August in Umatilla County injured one calf and killed another.

While checking cows, a livestock producer found an injured calf the evening of Aug. 28 in a large private forested pasture in the Horseshoe Ridge area.

The calf was approx-

imately 4 months old, weighed around 400 pounds and was intact. The calf was injured that evening, according to the ODFW report.

The morning of Aug. 29, several cow/calf pairs independently returned to the livestock producer's camp and one calf had an open wound above the right hock. This calf was approximately 3 months old and weighed around 300 pounds.

During the investigation that day, the producer was unable to restrain the calf for close examination. On Aug. 31, the calf was restrained and examined, and ODFW estimated the injury occurred six days prior.

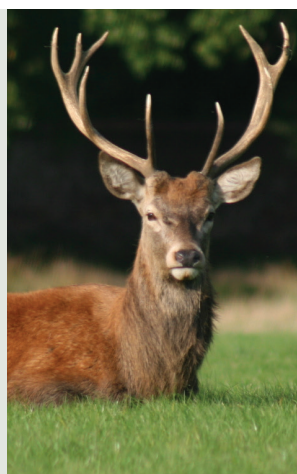
An examination of the dead calf revealed bite marks up to 1 inch deep on the inside and outside of both

rear legs above the hocks, near the anus and front right leg above the elbow.

The second calf suffered bites on its hind legs above the hocks, including a couple of patches of exposed muscle tissue.

"These two separate depredation events are attributed to the OR30 Wolves," ODFW reported.

—East Oregonian



Ready For a Home Loan?

Lee Ann Ottosen

HOME LOAN OFFICER |
CONSTRUCTION CERTIFIED

NMLS 277636 CALL 541-304-6112
LeeAnnOttosen@UmpquaBank.com
www.UmpquaBank.com/Lee-Ann-Ottosen

UMPQUA BANK
Member FDIC Equal Housing Lender NMLS 401867



BRAGGIN'
RIGHTS

HUNTING PHOTO CONTEST

Show off your
hunting skills

ENTER NOW

eastoregonian.com/braggin-rights



Erick Peterson/East Oregonian

The latest OMG! Burgers & Brew will be on Main Street in downtown Hermiston.

OMG! Burgers & Brew opens downtown location

Owner is excited for the opening of his second location

By **ERICK PETERSON**
East Oregonian

a good location for two years.

COVID-19 slowed his plan, but continued expansion, he said, remains the plan.

"We believe we have found a great place in Hermiston," he said.

Burt grew up in Hermiston and Umatilla, and he said he loves the area. The region, he said, is "booming." As such, people expect great restaurants.

By creating a Hermiston restaurant, he said he believes he will help improve dining options in the town. This will encourage other restaurants to open in Hermiston, which has happened in Walla Walla and continues happening in Pendleton. If enough restaurants open in Hermiston, it will become a destination.

"It benefits all restaurants and businesses," he said.

He added, his new restaurant also will benefit workers, as he is hiring 30 employees for Hermiston. He also has 30 employees at his Pendleton restaurant, he said.

Getting ready to open by the start of October, Burt was readying the restaurant. He was receiving equipment and working with the health department. He also was hiring employees.

"We also need more cooks, servers and hosts," he said.

HERMISTON — OMG! Burgers & Brew is opening in downtown Hermiston on Oct. 1. It is the second location for the popular restaurant, which has operated in Pendleton for more than three years.

It is a good time to open a restaurant, said Rodney Burt, OMG! owner. COVID-19 has caused many people to be isolated.

"People want to get out," he said. "They want to eat at a great place with family and friends."

The Hermiston menu will be the same as the one at the Pendleton restaurant. Also, the atmospheres of the two restaurants will match.

OMG!'s offerings include a variety of beef, pork and chicken burgers. Many of these burgers have fanciful names, such as "Gouda for Me Burger" and "Leggo My Eggo Burger." The restaurant also serves sausage dogs, salads, sliders, appetizers and desserts.

The children's menu has mini corn dogs, chicken nuggets, grilled cheese sandwiches and more.

Opening a second restaurant has been in the works for years. Burt's five-year plan includes having three restaurants in the area. For the last three years, he has wanted a second restaurant, and he has been trying to find

Tobias Unruh, owner
600 David Eccles Rd
Baker City, Oregon



OLD HICKORY
— BUILDINGS & SHEDS —

ELKHORN BARN Co.

Custom Barns and Storage

509-331-4558 • Elkhornbarns@gmail.com • 541-519-2968

Show off your
hunting skills

ENTER NOW

eastoregonian.com/braggin-rights