



WALLOWA COUNTY CHIEFTAIN

By Rocky Wilson
Wallowa County Chieftain

On Feb. 1, a change in the hierarchy at the Oregon Department of Forestry office in Wallowa sent the top official in that office, via promotion, to a new position in Prineville and replaced him with the best qualified among 16 applicants for the position, a man who’s been working in the Wallowa office since 2000.

Mike Shaw, who had performed the duty as unit forester in Wallowa since 2007, was promoted to a position as assistant to the area director of Oregon Department of Forestry (ODF), based in Prineville, and was replaced by Matt Howard, 45, who until Feb. 1 had op-

Becoming a unit forester has been a career goal of mine ever since I came to Wallowa.

“
Matt Howard

erated as ODF’s fire control officer in Wallowa.

John Buckman, ODF’s district forester based in La Grande, confirmed that 16 people applied to replace Shaw. About half of them were interviewed by a representative panel of county, ODF agency, program, and area landowners, and Howard was their choice.

In addition to his extensive experience of working in Wallowa County, Buckman said, “Matt has been very

successful working with partners.”

Howard says his overall emphasis will shift somewhat from hands-on fire control to “more of a strategic, behind-the-scenes approach.” Because fire control is such a significant portion of ODF’s role within Wallowa County, says Buckman, up to 70 percent of Howard’s new job will continue to deal with the many aspects of fire.

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Rocky Wilson/Chieftain

Matt Howard, former fire control officer for the Oregon Department of Forestry, in Wallowa, has been promoted to the local office’s top position of unit forester. He replaces Mike Shaw who was transferred to Prineville.



S.F. Tool/Chieftain

Wallowa Mountain Medical Clinic is being acquired by Wallowa Memorial Hospital.

TAKING CARE HOSPITAL ACQUIRING CLINIC IN JOSEPH

By Steve Tool
Wallowa County Chieftain

In a move to shore up Wallowa Memorial Hospital against changes in reimbursement levels and other health care parameters, the hospital intends to acquire Wallowa Mountain Medical Clinic.

The clinic, located in Joseph at 100 N East St., has a scheduled

turnover date of July 1 of this year. Directors of the Wallowa County Health Care District approved the purchase at their meeting on Feb. 16.

The hospital intends to maintain the clinic in Joseph and add another clinic on the hospital campus.

Wallowa Memorial Hospital (WMH) Chief Executive Officer Larry Davy said the acquisition holds positive aspects for both entities. “Health care is changing,

and the focus is on hospitals and clinics, how they work together and getting more into seamless care,” Davy said.

Seamless care includes integrating patient information, patient tracking and other patient needs between a hospital and clinic. “Any hospital you know today is going to be unrecognizable in five years because health care is changing — for example, where it’s done,” Davy

said.

Davy gave the example of treating a diabetic patient. “It’s far easier to coordinate if you’re one entity instead of two or three separately trying to help the person with the disease process. If you’re in one system, you’re in the same computer system, you have the same staff helping with treatment,” Davy said.

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Bill seeks to make vaccines required

Non-medical exceptions for immunizations high in Wallowa County

By Rocky Wilson
Wallowa County Chieftain

A bill currently percolating in the Oregon Senate would impact a higher percentage of Wallowa County residents than it would those living in most other areas of the state.

The bill, SB 442, would make immunizations mandatory for students attending public schools in Oregon, ending all the non-medical exemptions that are currently allowed.

Oregon State Senator Bill Hansell (R-Athena), who hasn’t taken a position on the measure, says it’s expected to pass.

Oregon is one of the least immunized of the nation’s 50 states and Wallowa County one of the least immunized counties in Oregon.

Wallowa County Health Nurse Laina Fisher confirms that non-medical exemptions from immunizations in Wallowa County are significantly higher than the state norm.

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Courtesy image/WVAC

Shelley Curtiss and Jerry Hayes designed a roadside sign that would inform visitors that Joseph is an Arts & Cultural District.

Funds sought for cultural district sign

JOSEPH — The Wallowa Valley Arts Council (WVAC) is in the process of soliciting funds to construct and erect an 8-foot x 10-foot stone-based sign to greet visitors to the City of Joseph.

The sign, designed to be lighted at its base, comes after a 2014 vote by the Joseph City Council that designated Joseph as the first civic arts and cultural district in the State of Oregon. Backing that designation with action, Joseph’s council voted earlier this month to set aside \$1,000 for the sign’s construction. The total estimated cost of the project is \$3,500, and \$2,500

of that total still needs to be secured.

Joseph artist Shelley Curtiss, chair of the WVAC, has designed a prototype of the large sign with the assistance of Jerry Hayes, owner of Hayes Printing and Graphics, of Enterprise.

Because the sign will become the property of WVAC, a nonprofit organization, donations for its construction and installation are tax-deductible. Donations can be mailed to Wallowa Valley Arts Council, P.O. Box 526, Joseph, OR 97846.

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Cycle Oregon’s riders set sights on county and lake

By Rocky Wilson
Wallowa County Chieftain

Cycle Oregon, an annual bicycle tour through Oregon that’s now drawing more than 2,000 riders for the week-long event, will spin through Wallowa County in mid-September of 2015. Called “Hell on Wheels” this year because the tour will allow cyclists the opportunity to get excellent views of canyons dwarfing the Snake River, this year’s loop beginning and ending in Baker City can take individual riders up to 435 miles, depending on day routes chosen.

The only stop for more than one night will come Sept. 16 and 17 when cyclists will be expected to pitch their tents at Wallowa Lake. According to the agenda for this year’s Cycle Oregon tour, participants are encouraged — at their leisure — to bike into Enterprise, bike into Joseph, or stay at the lake to sightsee and rest on Thursday, the 17th, after arriving the previous day from



Courtesy photo/Cycle Oregon

Cycle Oregon’s 84-mile leg on Sept. 16 goes on the scenic byway from Halfway to Wallowa Lake.

Halfway, an 84-mile ride.

This is the 27th year for Cycle Oregon, which began in 1988.

The popular one-week event will stretch from Sept. 12 through Sept. 19, with Saturday, Sept. 12, a day set aside to register and distribute partic-

ipant packets with no cycling. Day rides for participants, who typically come from most states and several foreign countries, can range between 51 and 103 miles.

In daily intervals, the 2015 tour will take participants 51 miles from Baker City to Farewell Bend, on the Snake River; 53 miles from Farewell Bend across the river into Idaho for a night in Cambridge; and then either 57 or 103 miles from Cambridge to Halfway, depending on the route.

In reference to Cycle Oregon’s Wednesday, Sept. 16, 84-mile ride from Halfway to Wallowa Lake, the Cycle Oregon website states, “The ride from Pine Valley to the high Wallowas is the most memorable we’ve ever laid on wheels.”

On Friday, Sept. 18, the cyclists will travel on Highway 82 for 85 miles to La Grande, then conclude the tour Saturday with a 59-mile ride back to Baker City.

