

# Enterprise School District budget bouncing back

Superintendent shares promising results of audit at recent board meeting

By Kathleen Ellyn  
Wallowa County Chieftain

The results of 2015 audit of the Enterprise School District (ESD) bookkeeping, presented to the school board Nov. 2, showcased how far the district has come since the passage of controversial Measure 5 in 1990.

Measure 5 capped property taxes dedicated to school funding at \$15 per \$1,000 of real market value per year and gradually decreased to \$5 per \$1,000 per year.

"That money never came back," said Enterprise Superintendent Brad Royse. "We are down one-third in teachers, administration and classified staff from what we were in the glory days prior to Measure 5."

When he came on board at ESD 13 years ago, Royse inherited not only a shortfall in operating expenses, but the loss of a \$4.5 million reserve fund in place to address funding emergencies. That fund was depleted in four years following the passage of Measure 5.

Since then, ESD has rekindled the reserve fund, depleted it again and added back several times.

"There have been so many times when state money has been suddenly reduced after it was allotted in May and we'd already written our budget," Royse said. "Eight out of 12 years this has happened. We need to have those reserves to ride through these storms."

In addition to the cuts of Measure 5, there have been "tremendous reductions in federal and timber funds, which meant we had to rein in as much as we could to keep our core," said school board member Nils Christoffersen.

Royse said that for the time being, the financial news is good.

"We're working toward our board goal of having \$1.6 million in reserve, as recommended by the auditors," he said. "We're not there, but we've turned the corner and we can look at adding back programs we've had to cut and growing our reserve account."

There is no indication that all of those cuts can be healed, but being in a position even to consider reinstating programs or staff was cause for celebration.

"Well done," Christoffersen said. "We're getting to a little better position to look at what is in the best interest of the school district. We can ask, 'What are the real needs today?'"

To that end the board will be discussing their options in upcoming meetings.

The good news is the result of both better financial times and district accounting reforms, Royse said. The district has been working very hard to meet recommendations that auditors make.

"When I came on, notes from auditors ran to three pages," Royse said. "There were bookkeeping violations



Kathleen Ellyn/Chieftain

Enterprise School District Superintendent and Elementary School Principal Brad Royse.

where money had been spent out of the wrong account or a separate account had not been made and there were recommendations about how much carry-over cash flow we should have and advice on restructuring funds already set up."

Now, Royse said, their docket was the cleanest he had seen since coming to the district, and auditors' notes amounted to just a few lines of suggestions and no violations.

The district also received \$106,000 in timber money for 2014-'15 after receiving no timber funding the previous year.

An upturn in the state economy has led to a slight increase in financial support for school districts as well. "We are getting more money per student," Royse said.

Also contributing to the overall turnaround is an increase in student enrollment and, as Royse noted: "We've

run a pretty tight ship."

The district is by no means free of financial constraints or emergencies.

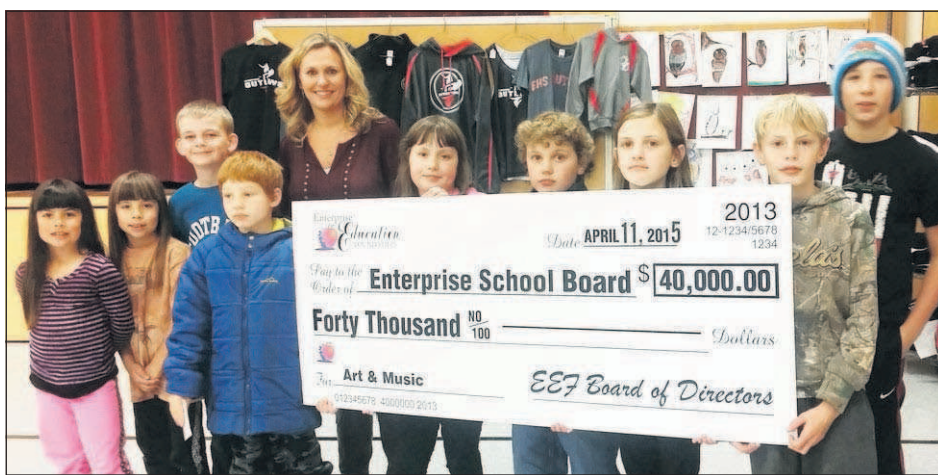
An example of an emergency is the juggling Royse has done to make sure the more than 60 special-needs students in the district are adequately served.

"We were not able to hire both a full-time teacher and a full-time aide," he said. "So, four part-time aides were hired and a major shift in duty assignments was made."

Even so, Royse said, the district was spending money that was not budgeted.

"It's all coming out of the instruction budget," he said. "I usually have some leeway there, but I doubt we'll have enough this year. I'm hoping for some federal money out of Title One funds, but we won't know until after January if we get that. I'm not highly hopeful that we'll get Title One funds, but if I do, I'll funnel it to those aides."

## ENTERPRISE EDUCATION FOUNDATION PRESENTS YEARLY AWARD TO ESD



Courtesy photo

A collection of some of the school children present at the Nov. 5 Turkey Bingo fundraising event present the annual \$40,000 check to Enterprise School District school board member Kate Fent. The Foundation makes this presentation yearly to help restore programs that may have been cut due to budget shortages. The Turkey Bingo event, sponsored by Community Bank, raised another \$2,500 for the foundation. The 18 turkeys that were given away to bingo winners were supplied by The Dollar Stretcher grocery of Enterprise.

## 20th Healthy Futures dinner set for Saturday

By Steve Tool  
Wallowa County Chieftain

The Wallowa Valley Health Care Foundation is celebrating its 20th Healthy Futures Dinner Auction on Saturday at Cloverleaf Hall, 668 NW 1st St., in Enterprise. The proceeds from the popular dinner auction are used to buy much needed equipment for Wallowa Memorial Hospital.

Foundation director Stacy Green said this year's event features a catered dinner, no-host bar and both live and silent auctions.

"As far as I'm aware, this was the first event of its kind in the county," Green said. "Now there's a million of them. In 1996, the first year, it raised over \$19,000, which is quite a bit."

Green said the 2014 auction grossed \$71,000, but the challenges of fundraising accumulate as competition with other fundraising dinners increases.

The major purpose for the auction proceeds this year is to purchase a state-of-the-art bone-density system that is essential for diagnosing osteoporosis in both women and men and costs over \$50,000. Past foundation purchases of equipment for the hospital include an advanced life-support ambulance and a digital mammography machine.

### MORE INFORMATION

**Wallowa Valley Health Care Foundation**  
<http://www.wvhcf.org/>

**Winding Waters River Expeditions**  
<http://windingwatersrafting.com/>

**Wildhorse Resort**  
<http://www.wildhorseresort.com/>

**OK Theatre**  
<http://theoldok.com/>

7:30 p.m. Matt Kurtz will emcee the event and Jake Mussler will provide auctioneering services. Carolyn Lochert and Gail Swart will provide entertainment.

The auction is offering a number of items up for live and silent bid, including: Wildhorse Resort weekend golf getaway, a half-day guided fishing trip from Winding Waters River Expeditions and a one-year pass for two to OK Theatre concerts.

As of the Monday afternoon, tickets were still available at a price of \$60. Checks should be made out to WVHCF and either dropped off at the Wallowa Memorial Hospital front desk, or slid underneath the WVHCF door at the hospital.

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