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Police chief search begins anew

Sudden firing of police chief in Illinois has direct impact on local search

By Kathleen Ellyn
Wallowa County Chieftain

Enterprise City Council announced Friday that its top pick for police chief has withdrawn his application.

James Episcopo of Brookfield Village, Ill., has opted to remain in Illinois following the firing of Brookfield Police Chief Steven Stelter on Oct. 30. Episcopo, a lieutenant, has been serving as acting chief since then. He is Patrol Commander in charge of 21 officers and has served as acting chief several times in the past.

“We were very sorry to hear he was staying, but he was reluctant to leave his men in an unsettled situation and it was exactly this integrity that made him such an attractive candidate,” said Michele Young, Enterprise city administrator.



Episcopo

Enterprise City Council voted unanimously to make a conditional offer to Episcopo in early October

after he and his wife Suzanne toured Wallowa County, met members of the public, spent time with Enterprise police officers and confirmed their desire to be part of the community.

At the time of the conditional offer, Young warned that the process could take several months to complete and revealed the council’s decision to develop another pool of candidates in case Episcopo declined the offer.

Wallowa County Sheriff Steve Rogers has always maintained that he did not want to consider extending county services to cover the city.

However, Rogers met Episcopo and assisted the city in developing an effective interview process for candidates.

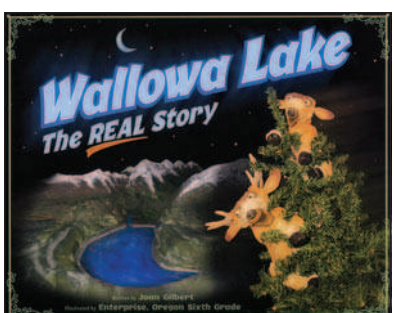
“If Enterprise asks for my help I’ll give it, but it’s none of my business (otherwise),” Rogers said. “I keep my nose out of it. I know that in these high-level professional positions like this it just takes a long time to find the right person. I think James (Episcopo) had all the good intentions in the world going in.”

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INSIDE TODAY



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“Wallowa Lake — The Real Story” (Mt. Emily Press, 2015) by Joan Gilbert.

Children’s book tells lake’s story

Book the byproduct of student art project

By Scot Heisel
Wallowa County Chieftain

What did two ambitious and inquisitive deer and one very annoyed pine tree have to do with the formation of a local gem of nature, Wallowa Lake?

The answer lies in a new children’s book that is the culmination of a sixth-grade art project that started in 2011.

“Wallowa Lake — The Real Story” (Mt. Emily Press, 2015) by Joan Gilbert offers a whimsical legend of how the lake came to be, followed by a few science lessons that provide an actual, geological explanation of the forces that carved it into our landscape.

Gilbert wrote the book’s storyline, but the illustrations were pulled from a short claymation film by the same name that was produced four years ago with her guidance by Colby Knifong’s sixth-grade class at Enterprise Elementary.

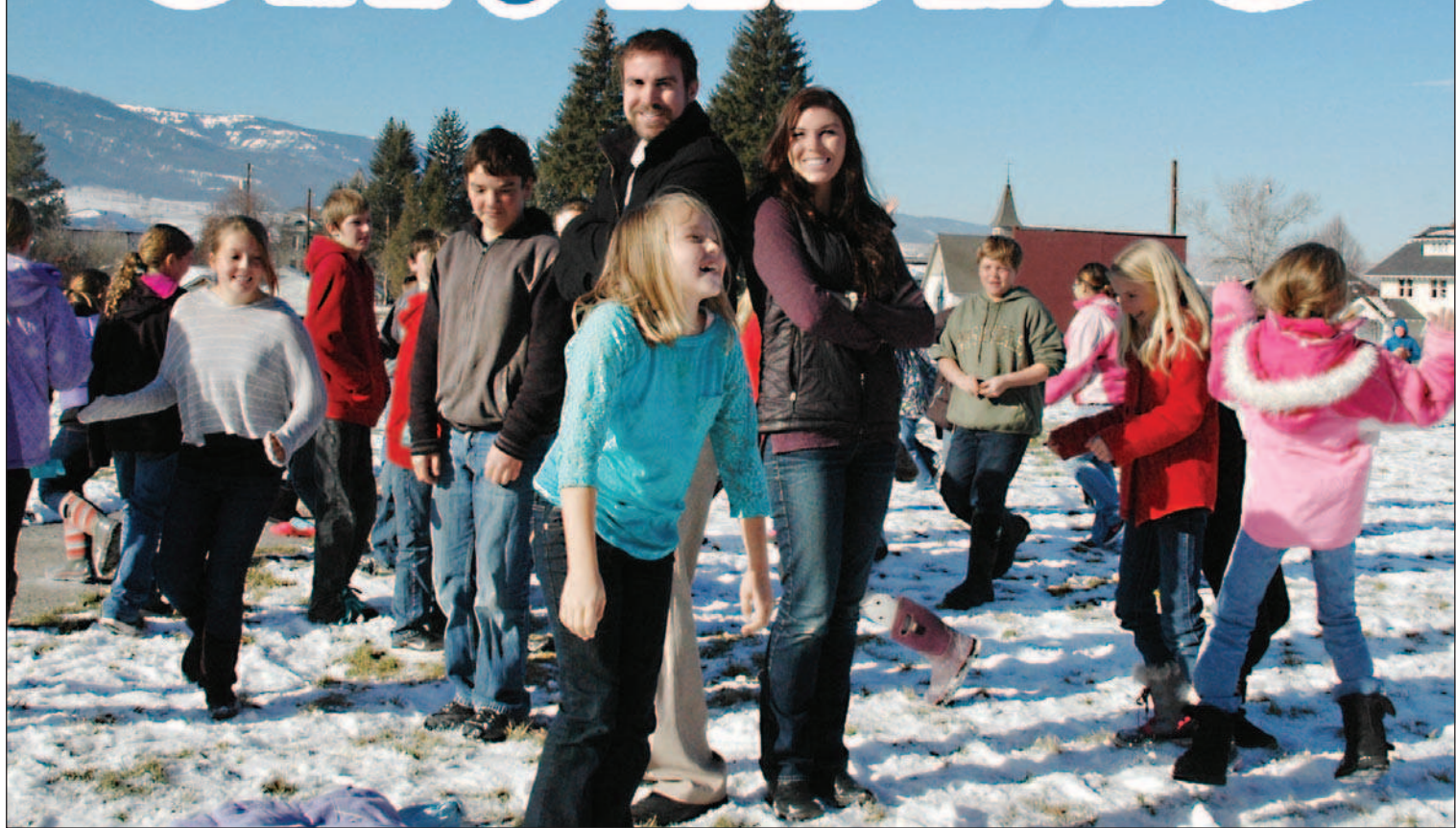
“My son was in sixth grade,” Gilbert said. “I knew it probably was my last art project with them, so I wanted to do something really big. Before that, I had been teaching animation to kids at Chief Joseph Summer Camp.”

Gilbert, who is a graphic designer as well as an author, had been involved with her kids’ school art projects for years before the Wallowa Lake film.

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SCHOOL GETS CREATIVE WITH

CROWDING



Kathleen Ellyn/Chieftain

Team-teachers Kyle Crawford and Jordan Alford surrounded by their sixth-grade students.

Faced with over-full sixth grade, Enterprise Elementary employs unique approach

By Kathleen Ellyn
Wallowa County Chieftain

Thirty-seven kids is just too many for one sixth-grade class.

That’s the problem that faced Enterprise Schools Superintendent Brad Roysse this year. Splitting the class in half was the logical step, but not the kind one, Roysse said. “School had already started

and I didn’t want to make the kids decide which teacher they wanted,” he said.

Instead, he played to the strengths of two new first-year teachers, Kyle Crawford and Jordan Alford, and divided the class only by subject matter.

The teachers are in adjacent rooms and the kids cycle between them, 18 students at a time.

“It’s much like junior high,”

said Crawford. “The students just switch classes.”

Crawford teaches math, science and social studies, while Alford teaches English, reading and spelling.

So far, the parents and students love this arrangement, Roysse said.

It’s the best of both worlds: small class sizes means more teacher interaction, and sixth grade is still a single class, socially.

PNW cattlemen fed up with large wildfires

Washington ranchers blame state, federal agencies

By Dan Wheat
Capital Press

CLE ELUM, Wash. — A panel of ranchers at the Washington Cattlemen’s Association annual meeting unloaded frustration and anger at state and federal agencies, saying their land management practices and inept fire fighting are to blame for massive losses of rangeland, cattle and fencing in the last two years.

The losses threaten the cattle industry, particularly in Okanogan County where more than 1 million acres burned in the last two summers.

That totals one third of the entire acreage of the county which, at 5,315 square miles, is larger than some states. Millions of dollars of public and private timber have been lost. About 1,000 head of cattle died in the Carlton fire last year in Okanogan County while the tally so far

this year is under 300. Hundreds of miles of fencing were lost both years but probably the biggest impact is loss of grazing on thousands of acres for several years causing ranchers to buy more hay and sell off cattle.

“There’s got to be some change or this will ruin our industry,” said Vic Stokes, a Twisp rancher, who lost 250 head of cattle and 90 percent of his grazing in the Carlton fire.

The convention panel, Nov. 12 at Sunca-dia Resort, faulted the U.S. Forest Service and state agencies for not thinning forests and not allowing grazing which would reduce fire fuel loads.

The ranchers said local firefighters do good work but are restrained when state and federal agencies take over.



Dan Wheat/Capital Press

Vic Stokes, Twisp, Wash., rancher, speaks on wildfire panel at the Washington Cattlemen’s Association annual meeting near Cle Elum, Wash., Nov. 12. To his right is Okanogan County Commissioner Jim DeTro, Curlew rancher Doug Grumbach and Centerville rancher Neil Kayser.

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