

Expansions and a call for assistance



BIZ BUZZ

Kathleen Ellyn

Janet Standeford, director of the Experience Works program for Wallowa County, dropped by the paper the other day to let us know that the Experience Works Program was looking for clients.

The program — formerly known as Green Thumb and launched by Ladybird Johnson back in 1965 — puts people age 55 and older of limited income back to work for up to 21 hours a week at minimum wage.

The program requires both on-the-job-training by the employer and extensive testing and skills building on the part of the client.

Working for minimum wage is no way to get rich, but many older Americans find it very difficult to find paying work, part-time work or a way to break into a new field. Going to work for a nonprofit at minimum wage can sometimes open doors they did not expect.

Right now there is just one Experience Works client in Joseph, but Standeford is looking for another to work at the Maxville Interpretive Center. There are other opportunities as well.

I was in this program when I was on the west side of the mountain and was placed in a state job where it was my boss' intention to hire me full time after a year of on-the-job training — if I was not hired elsewhere first.

Unfortunately, state budget cuts eliminated the job for which I was being groomed, along with several others, and I moved on. But I thoroughly enjoyed the process and can highly recommend it.

It's important for folks who don't think they qualify for "low income" to know that the program figures low income generously and the money you make in Experience Works also does not count when figuring your qualifying income for HUD housing, SNAP benefits or SSI.

Experience Works is a good way to brighten your prospects in a new field, especially for folks looking to refresh a resume after some time out of the job market while caring for family members or other reasons.

If you think you might fit in this program, or if you are a nonprofit looking for some good part-time help (free to you), call Janet Standeford or her assistant at 541-850-4573.

On Saturday, July 2, Anita and Kim Metlen, the designers and driving force behind the Joseph Rail Riders, will hold a ribbon-cutting for Oregon Coast Railriders in Bay City, Ore.

The business team had been looking for places to expand their business after the success of the Joseph Rail Riders experience and settled on the track going from Bay City to Tillamook, an 11-mile round trip that takes a little more than two hours. The route will begin in Bay City, continue along the rail line passing Blue Heron French Cheese Co. in Tillamook and then double back to Bay City.

This is just the beginning, according to the Metlens, who have their eyes on the Oregon Coast Scenic Railway among other possible routes.

"For now we're just sticking with this," Kim said.

The Joseph Rail Riders set out from Joseph three times a day (9 a.m., noon and 3 p.m.) Thursday through Monday. The Minam-to-Wallowa ride and return, about 26 miles and six hours, leaves at 9 a.m. Thursday



Patrick Thiel delivers some organic onions to a Portland chef.

to Monday.

The Joseph Branch Railriders have a website at JBrailriders.com and a Facebook page is in the works. To book a Wallowa County ride, call 541-910-0981. Tickets are \$20 per person ages 12 and older and \$10 per child 11 years and younger when accompanied by an adult. Tickets can be purchased at the departure point.

This last bit of news goes in the good news/bad news category. It's good news because it gives us all a chance to put our money where our principals are and help out a local business. The bad news is that the successful business has suffered unavoidable setbacks of late.

I'm talking about Prairie Creek Farm, Patrick Thiel's organic farm in Joseph on the Dagger Ranch that I told you about recently in the article on quinoa growers in Wallowa County.

Following in his famous (in Organic Farm circles) father's footsteps, Patrick has developed a route for selling his organic produce to top restaurants in Portland and continued to blaze a trail for other organic producers to follow.

However, Patrick has been fighting debt left after his father died in 2013 and several crop failures hit the farm.

He has just kept plugging, as farmers do. But sometimes all the best intentions and hard work in the world meet a roadblock so large a man cannot surmount it on his own. As of now, Patrick cannot qualify for an operating loan to produce this year's crop. He already has planted most of his crops, but as Wallowa County people know, planting is just the first part of an expensive process that hopefully leads to a good harvest. Then it will be time for another big push to bring that harvest to market — especially for Patrick since he delivers his product all over the Northwest himself.

For the full story and to join 150 people and counting in helping Prairie Creek Farm this year, visit the farm's "Go Fund Me" page at www.gofundme.com/gcwjd3js and help Thiel get this year's crops on their way to market and help to build the Wallowa County Brand.

Please send your Biz Buzz news tips to Kathleen Ellyn at kellyn@wallowa.com.



Kathleen Ellyn/Chieftain

Mike Lund sharing space at Mike's Garage on Main Street in Joseph as Mike's Saw Shop/ Mike's Small Engine Service.

Small engine repairman Lund returns to county

By Kathleen Ellyn
Wallowa County Chieftain

Mike Lund is back. For 15 years Lund was the proprietor of Mike's Saw Shop in Enterprise before he moved into La Grande and opened AC Power Sports (next to Walmart). He sold that business some years ago and worked for John Deere for a while, but he said he missed Wallowa County.

"Everybody knows me in Wallowa County," he said. "I just love to spoil people and I'm just happy to be back in the county."

He's sharing space at Mike's Garage on Main Street in Joseph as Mike's Saw Shop/ Mike's Small Engine Service and will be fixing boat mo-

tors, chain saws, lawn mowers, ATVs and more for a bargain price.

"My motto is twice the service at half the price," he said. "Most guys charge \$90 an hour — and I am that kind of guy, the kind that could charge \$90 an hour — but I'm charging \$39 an hour. I just want to spend the

rest of my time in Joseph."

Mike has 35 years of experience in his chosen profession and has worked extensively with Stihl, Husky and John Deere engines. Call him in Joseph at 541-786-0774 or drop by from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. weekdays and 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Saturday.

M. C R O W & C O .



L O S T I N E , O R



Come Celebrate!

Join your friends & neighbors at the Wallowa Lake Lodge for an afternoon of fun & festivities.

Saturday, June 4th
3pm to Dusk

- Food & refreshments, no host bar, live music, meet owners & donors, CJD Rodeo Court, video presentation and
- Tours of the lodge & grounds!

Champagne & Cider Toast
4pm



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MAIN STREET • JOSEPH, OREGON

★ FRIDAY 7pm-11pm Cruise Dance at Joseph Community Center
OPEN TO THE PUBLIC (Adults Only) \$5 at the door. Music by: THE SENDERS

★ SATURDAY: Show-n-Shine 9am-3pm

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