

Transparency law drives improvements

Oregon health care transparency rating moves up from an F to a B

Wallowa County Chieftain

Due in large part to legislation the Oregon Association of Hospitals and Health Systems sponsored in 2015, Oregon has received a health care transparency rating of "B" in its latest report card on price transparency.

In every previous edition of the scorecard, Oregon had received an F along with most other states in the nation. Now Oregon is one of seven states that received a grade above failing. The state is one of only one of four to earn an A or B.

The report says that Oregon merits the B grade because it "collects data in an [All Payer All Claims] database, including paid amounts, and publishes the data on a good website for consumers. Oregon can earn an even higher score if the state collects practitioner prices in

addition to facility prices and does so for a greater number of services and procedures."

The report card rates states on a series of metrics, all of which focus on whether the public is being provided with high-quality, accessible health care pricing information. The new report cites OregonHospitalGuide.org, where Oregon's data is displayed in an easy-to-use, accessible and comparable manner as a key reason Oregon moved up the ranks this year.

"I'm gratified that the hard work we did in the 2015 Legislative Session on health care price transparency has paid off," said Sen. Laurie Monnes-Anderson of Gresham, who was a lead sponsor of the bill. "In the end, more health care information leads to better choices."

"We tackled the tricky issue of health care pricing transparency head on in 2015 and I'm proud to know that our hard work did not go unnoticed," said Rep. John Lively of Springfield, who also shepherded the bill through the legislature.

Castilleja retires after 35 years with Community Bank

By Kathleen Ellyn
Wallowa County Chieftain

After a 35-year career in banking, Community Bank Chief Operations Officer Sharon Castilleja is retiring this summer.

It's a bittersweet farewell, Castilleja said.

"I enjoyed my co-workers and customers and the job has treated me well," she said. "I think banking got in my blood. I enjoyed the challenges and it was a good job."

Castilleja was first hired at age 19 back in 1970 as part of a seven-person team in Wallowa County. Back then the branch was located in the current Indigo Gallery building located on the corner of Main Street and E. Williams Avenue in Joseph.

Sharon worked with the former management duo of "Cheatham and Steele" — Jim Cheatham was President and John Steele was cashier.

Contrary to their surnames, they were professional and trusted bankers, she recalls.

The rest of the team included Mildred McKinley, Phyllis Lovell, Saonni (Witty) Talbott and Sandy Warnock (of Simply Sandy's).

Although her beginnings were humble (Sharon's first position mainly consisted of



Courtesy photo

Community Bank Chief Operating Officer Sharon Castilleja is retiring.

typing out 1099 Interest tax forms), in just a few years she was the secretary to the President and the corporate secretary to the board of directors.

By 1976 she was promoted to branch manager at the new Enterprise location, but after just a year, she took a break from banking to raise her two sons.

She returned nearly 12 years later as operations officer. There were challenges, she recalled.

"When I started back in '70, there wasn't a computer in the bank," she said. "Now, everything is pretty electronic. It can be quite a challenge when you didn't grow up in the com-

puter age."

But Sharon always was up for the challenge — and enjoyed it.

"Success, to me, is 'Am I giving 100 percent?'" she said. "I have never been bored — not one day — in this job."

By 1995, she was promoted to assistant vice president and to VP/senior operations officer in 1998. From 2001 to 2005 she was a senior vice president, and in 2005 she took on her current role of executive vice president/COO for Community Bank.

"Sharon has been the jack of all trades for the bank over the years," said Tom Moran, president/CEO. "With all the

changing regulations, Sharon was always there to dig in and take on the new tasks that needed to be done."

Sharon's newest challenge will be as a director for Community Bank. Joining the board upon her retirement will keep her valuable experience accessible for the executive management team in the coming years.

"We were delighted that she accepted the Board position, it softens the blow of her retirement, just a bit," Moran said.

Some friends and family worry that Sharon will be bored in retirement, but she's got a plan.

"I'm going to sleep for the first six months," she said. Then, she plans on spending more time with her husband, County Commissioner Paul Castilleja, and extended family (especially those four grandchildren).

But she'll miss her work family.

"You come to work every day and this becomes your second family," she said. "Just getting to know people and being involved in the community is enjoyable. There are a lot of good people in this county. I was born and raised in Joseph and a lot of my customers were friends and neighbors."

Hells Canyon Mule Days
Dutch Oven Cookoff

Teams may enter one dish in two entry categories. There will be cash awards for 1st and 2nd place, and a gift basket for the People's Choice award.

Sunday, Sept. 11
FMI: 541-263-0104
hellscanyonmuledays.com for cookoff info and entry form

Biochar conference explores its use in forestry, ag

By Eric Mortenson
EO Media Group

The status and future of biochar is the subject of a four-day conference in August.

The conference, titled "The Synergy of Science and Industry: Biochar's Connection to Ecology, Soil, Food and Energy," happens Aug. 22-25 at Oregon State University in Corvallis. Registration costs \$375 for the full conference; \$250

for students and nonprofits; \$150 for one-day attendance.

Biochar is essentially charcoal produced by a pyrolysis process of heating biomass in a low-oxygen environment. The biomass fuel can include such things as logging slash or field straw, which is why it draws interest from the timber and ag industries.

Researchers and industry advocates say biochar has multiple uses in agriculture and forestry. It can provide a quick fix to depleted soil by reducing acidity, retaining moisture and storing carbon. Conference Chair Tom Miles, founder of T.R. Miles Technical Consultants Inc., in Portland, said it's already used by vineyards in drought-stricken California.

In Japan, biochar develops the strong root systems needed to transplant rice.

Commercial cannabis growers favor biochar for the same reason, Miles said.

In Eastern Oregon, OSU dryland cropping agronomist Stephen Machado is in the third year of researching biochar's use on Columbia Basin wheat and pea crops.

One application of biochar continues to produce a "nice response" in test plots, Machado said.

Wheat yields increased 20 to 33 percent and pea yields increased at a similar rate, Machado said. Soil pH also improved.

"I'm a true believer," Machado said.

He cautioned that not all biochar products are the same, however. The chemistry of the biomass material used to make biochar and the chemistry of the soil on which it will be applied must be considered, he



Capital Press File

Biochar made from bluegrass screenings is shown in this photo. An upcoming conference will focus on research involving the substance.

Miles, the conference chair, said biochar increasingly is used in bioswales to filter stormwater or to capture pollutants, and has been shown to remove phosphorous from dairy manure.

Research is progressing on multiple fronts, and entrepreneurs are jumping into biochar production. The Corvallis conference is intended for farmers, foresters, policy makers, biochar producers and other industry professionals and entrepreneurs.

For more conference information, including schedule and registration details, visit <http://usbi2016.org>. Additional information is available through the Northwest Biochar Working Group: <http://nwbiochar.org>.

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Aug. 6, 2016 8-11 p.m. • \$5 per person • Joseph Community Center - 400 E. 1st St, Joseph, OR
"Come and Celebrate the Good Times of the Past and the New Friendships of Today"
No Host Bar provided by Leo of El Bajjo

WALLOWA COUNTY FAIR
Country Pride Shared County Wide

Schedule of Selected Events

SAT. AUGUST 6
► 9am 4-H Dog Show

SUN-TUES AUGUST 7-9
► 8am Sun-Tues 4-H Horse Show

MON. AUGUST 8
► 4-H Exhibits to Cloverleaf
► Open Class Non-Perishable to Cloverleaf

TUES. AUGUST 9
► Open Class Perishable to Cloverleaf

WED.-SAT. AUGUST 10-13
► 10 am Cloverleaf Hall Opens

WED. AUGUST 10
► 2-6 pm 4-H/FFA Livestock Entries

THURS.-FRI. AUGUST 11-12
► 8:30 am 4-H/FFA Livestock Show
► 7 pm Grand Champion Classes

SAT. AUGUST 13
► 8 am Small Animal Show

Special Events

WED. AUGUST 10
► 9am Planter Contest Entries

THURS. AUG 9
► 1 pm Grange Pie, Ice Cream

FRI. AUG 12
► 5-7 pm K.C. Kunkle LIVE
► 8-10 pm Teen Dance

SAT. AUG 13
► Benny Beaver Day at the fair
► 10 am Pee Wee Showmanship
► 11 am Games on the grass

4-H/FFA LIVESTOCK SALE 6PM

For a full schedule call 541-426-4097 or go to extension.oregonstate.edu/wallowa

Live Music By **K.C. KUNKLE** Fri. Aug. 12 at 5pm

Live Music By **Briana Renea** Sat. Aug. 6 at 6pm