

Thunder Run rumbles through weekend

By Steve Tool
Wallowa County Chieftain

Sunny skies and balmy temperatures did their part to fill the Wallowa Valley with motorcycles of all kinds as the third annual Thunder Run brought bikers from afar for the event.

The Thunder Run, which took place Aug. 25-28, saw a huge boost in attendance, according to event organizer Gary Bethscheider.

“I’m thinking we had roughly 600 to 700 in town. We didn’t have as many as that attend the rally, though,” he said. He estimated that attendance was up more than 40 percent over the previous year.

The four-day event featured a poker run, biker games, music, fundraisers for local nonprofits and tour rides as well as the Thunder Run Parade in which more than 100 bikers took part — twice as many as last year.

“The weather really helped us a lot. There were a lot of bikes in town, and the hotels were full,” Bethscheider said.

Randy Pritchett, a U.S.



Steve Tool/Chieftain

More than 100 bikes lined up for the Thunder Run Parade on Friday in Joseph.

Forest Service employee from Lewiston, Idaho, has attended the previous two Thunder Runs and said he wouldn’t miss the event for the world.

“I think it’s small enough to be able to see your old friends you haven’t seen in a year,” Pritchett said. “I’ve seen a half dozen people I haven’t seen in the last year.

... we didn’t skip a beat, and everything is still the same. That’s the unique thing about it.”

And does he plan to return next year?

“Absolutely. I think every year this will get bigger and bigger,” Pritchett said. “The beauty of the rides and scenery, the view of the Wallowas and the overlook really make

this place special.”

One thing Bethscheider would like to see is a little community support for other events as well as his own.

“The people in this county need to step up and support these events. These events are what’s keeping this county alive,” he said.

Despite the apparent success of the event, Beth-

scheider still sees room for improvement.

“We definitely had a better year than we’ve ever had. I always want more, but it’s going to take some time. It’s not going to happen over night, so we’ll just keep plugging away at it.”

Next year’s Thunder Run rally is scheduled for Aug. 24-27.

Get your groove on at Juniper Jam

By Steve Tool
Wallowa County Chieftain

Labor Day weekend means it’s time once again for Juniper Jam — Saturday, Sept. 3, to be exact.

The Wallowa County Fairgrounds plays host to the 8th annual jam that serves as a fundraiser for the Wallowa Valley Music Alliance. The festival brings in 600-700 attendees.

This year’s event features eight acts from the Pacific Northwest playing a variety of music from rock to blues to Americana and reggae. Not bad for a one-day festival. Acts from Portland include: Lewi Longmire & the Left Coast Roasters, Ashleigh Flynn & the Porch Climbers, Will West & Groovy Wallpaper, local favorite Kory Quinn.

Sum People is a reggae/ska band hailing from La Grande. Misé, newly relocated to Enterprise, is the lone Wallowa County entrant. Out-of-state performers include Laney Lou & the Bird Dogs of Bozeman, Mont., and Tracy Spring of Bellingham, Wash.

In an interesting twist, the event features two stages with its nine straight hours of music.

“We don’t use them simultaneously; it’s one right after the other,” said WVMA Director Janis Carper. “It’s not like some festivals where it’s one stage and then a break between performers, and we’ve done that from the beginning.”

The two stages are called the Main and Tunesmith stages.

“The quality of the music isn’t any better between the stages, but the Tunesmith stage has shorter sets,” Carper said.

Two new additions to the



Kathleen Elynn/Chieftain archive

Will West and the Friendly Strangers perform at the 2015 Juniper Jam.

event include a songwriting contest and a songwriting workshop featuring festival performer Tracy Spring. Cost of the workshop, which runs from 10:30 a.m. to noon, is \$20.

“These are something we’ve been wanting to try for a long time but never seemed to get around to it, but with the passing of T.R. Ritchie, who has played here, we thought it was time to start honoring him with the contest,” Carper said.

Expect to see several vendors, including those selling beer, food, coffee and art.

Carper also said some of the event’s performers will play at Terminal Gravity the Friday night before the festival.

Music starts at 1 p.m. and

Festival honors T.R. Ritchie with songwriting contest

By Steve Tool
Wallowa County Chieftain

As a nod to the Juniper Jam’s focus on original music, the Wallowa Valley Music Alliance added a songwriting contest in memory of T.R. Ritchie, a beloved songwriter with ties to the Pacific Northwest and several members of the WVMA. He also performed in Wallowa County on numerous occasions.

A festival committee selected 10 submissions as finalists for the contest with cash prizes and a spotlight showcase on the Jam’s main stage for the winner. Four of the 10 finalists are Northeast Oregon residents, with Joseph fiddler Caleb Samples representing the Wallowa Valley.

Wallowa Valley Music

Alliance Secretary Heidi Muller filled in the details: “We had a June deadline so the submissions could be culled down to the 10 finalists,” she said.

Entrants were allowed to submit more than one song to the contest, although each song required a fee for consideration. Entries from as far away as Portland, Caldwell, Idaho, and Kent, Wash., made the top 10 cut, as did some from Baker City and La Grande.

The two winners will each receive a short performing slot on the main stage as well as a \$200 cash award. Muller said the contest likely will become an annual event.

“It’s an effort to get things started, but then the word get out, and I think we’d like to build on it.”

runs until about 10 p.m. Tickets are \$15 and are available at Joseph Hardware, The Dollar Stretcher, The Bookloft and M. Crow and Co. They’re also available online at www.brownpapertickets.com/event/2550289 or for \$18 at the gate — if they’re not sold

out. Attendees age 12 and under can enter for free.

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