



THREE minutes with ...



BRIAN COUGHLAN

Brian Coughlan is a fifth-generation Wallowa County native who graduated from Joseph High School, went away to begin his career and came home in 2001.

After graduating from Joseph High, he earned a degree in psychology from the University of Oregon and went to work managing assisted living group homes in Portland. He leaped into a new career in Internet marketing in New York City. There he met his wife, Cheryl, who is now executive director at the Josephy Center. The couple has two children, Ella, 16, and Henry, 13.

They didn't want to raise children in New York City, so Brian told his wife they could move anywhere they wanted — and she chose Portland. But they came to Wallowa County first and never left. Coughlan owns Eastern Oregon Landscaping, employs 15 people seasonally, and plows snow in the winter.

He's very active with the Lions Club International and works as the ski hill manager at Ferguson Ski Ridge. His wife is involved in Wallowa County Rotary International. He's also director of the North East Oregon Aviation Foundation and works at increasing awareness of aviation within the county and helps the foundation toward its goal of establishing aviation education in all of the schools in the county.

His services as a landscaper are also valuable for community projects. He spent countless hours working on the Joseph Park project and recently finished installing the irrigation and sod there. He sponsors many events and does "a million other things school-related."

Oh, and he's a gravedigger.

Q. You've seen some sights and experienced some different cultures in your lifetime. What made Wallowa County attractive to you?

A. Family and lifestyle definitely, that's what keeps us here. For me this lifestyle gives me time to be with my kids and family and friends. Being here allows me to go skiing and do the things I like. I can live my lifestyle more so than in the city.

Q. How did you decide to go into landscaping as a way to make a living in the county?

A. I worked for Terry Bates at Wallowa County Nursery on Fish Hatchery Lane through high school and college and knew the business. When I came back, and we decided to

stay here, I had to decide what to do, and this is what I knew here, and there was a need for it. So, I started the company.

I like meeting the people I get to meet and most of the time it's creative. I like the creative aspect of it. It's the new installations I like best.

At one point, I expanded to a big landscaping and nursery in La Grande and had 50-some employees, but I sold out of that and came back to this.

Q. What changes have you seen in Wallowa County and what do you think of them?

A. Wallowa County has definitely transformed. There has always been tourism, but having Joseph rebuilt and having the image upscaled was a change in culture. It's not just logging as it used to be, it's not resource based — it's service based, which can be good or can be bad.

The other big thing is the Internet because you can be in Joseph and have access to the world. You could never do that before. I wouldn't be here if the Internet didn't exist. The Wallowa County lifestyle is great but I want access to the world.

Now you're seeing a lot of people move here that are able to because they work remotely, they work in San Francisco and live in Joseph. You get all of the benefits of a small town but some of the benefits of a big town. There are definitely more viewpoints, which in general is good.

I hope my kids just have a choice. Without the Internet, growing up, I felt I had no choice because you only saw what you saw here. That's no longer the case.

My kids can choose. They don't have to sit in a car and look at streetlights all day long. If you want to you can, but you don't have to. You can work in an office or not — I just want to give them a choice.

Wallowa County Pride event organizers go public

First event was held in a private home last year

By Kathleen Ellyn
Wallowa County Chieftain

Upwards of 70 people — up from 15 last year — showed for Wallowa County's second annual Pride Celebration Saturday at Joseph City Park.

Hosted by Wallowa County natives Kyrie Weaver and Stefanie Duncan, the event was a barbecue potluck with live music.

"We decided we needed to be transparent and invite our allies and friends from the community to join us," said co-organizer Megan Bowen of Enterprise.

"We wanted this to be an affirmation of support from the community no matter how they identified."

Several information boards were set up near the entrance of the park, nearly 100 veggie-burgers and hamburgers were cooked, and multiple tables groaned with the load of potluck dishes.

Many in attendance wore rainbow flag capes and other colorful attire.

It was a family friendly event and children played on the new park equipment. Gianna Espinoza of Enterprise brought her daughter, Nyahla Simmons, 6, who was having a great time with a friend, Kaylee Kvasnikoff, 6,



Nyahla Simmons, 6, daughter of Jessica Espinoza of Enterprise, and Kaylee Kvasnikoff, 6, daughter of Megan Smith enjoy the Pride picnic at Joseph Park on June 24.

Kathleen Ellyn/Chieftain

daughter of Megan Smith of Enterprise.

Both girls were dressed for a party, sporting rainbow colors and were satisfied with the age-appropriate explanations they had been given for the event.

Kaylee said she knew the party was to celebrate being whoever you want to be. Nyahla added it was to cele-

brate being who you want to be and loving whom you want to love.

Gianna Espinoza was pleased to see so many allies, individuals who support gay rights, at the party.

"When I moved here, I really wanted to join the Gay-Straight Alliance here," she said. "Rural communities need to know that we aren't scary,

we're just human, and we love who we want to love."

The "scary" worked both ways for many in the LGBTQ community in Wallowa County when they first arrived.

Many rural communities have a reputation for intolerance and open rejection, Espinoza said.

But this year's event went off without a hitch, and the

YOU SHOULD KNOW

Safe Harbors welcomes LGBTQ youth to a Safe Space Youth Program the third Thursday of each month 6:30-8 p.m. at Safe Harbors, 401 NE First Street, Suite B, in Enterprise.

To become a volunteer advocate with Safe Harbors, call 541-426-4004 or email safe@eoni.com.

RURAL COMMUNITIES NEED TO KNOW THAT WE AREN'T SCARY, WE'RE JUST HUMAN, AND WE LOVE WHO WE WANT TO LOVE.

Gianna Espinoza
Pride Celebration attendee

LGBTQ community enjoyed the company of allies that outnumbered them by more than three to one.

Co-host Duncan of Enterprise was the quiet celebrity of the day. Though few outside the community know it, Duncan, who works as an advocate at Safe Harbors, was recently named Gay and Lesbian Archives of the Pacific Northwest "Queer Hero" for her work in advocating for individuals.

Her primary work is with children and families experiencing domestic violence, but she is the face of LGBTQ sup-

port in Wallowa County as well.

"We felt it was really important to take a stand and say we are here, we are part of the community," she said.

Duncan's coworker, Kyrie Weaver of Wallowa, was glad the decision had been made to be more public, as well.

"We're so often not public," she said.

"Usually in this county, we hold our pride behind closed doors. I think it's important that we're visible. It's hard for youth to see there is someone like them when we're invisible."

Maxville center gets \$8,180 grant for kiosks

Maxville Heritage Interpretive Center in Joseph has received an \$8,180 grant for developing and installing kiosks with an interactive connection to web-based information. The grant, awarded by Oregon Heritage, is one of eight totaling \$55,140 to museums across the state. Maxville donors and volunteers matched the grant with \$4,000.

Oregon Heritage grants are

made for collections and tourism or education related projects. Most grants awards range between \$4,000 to \$10,000.

The competitive grant program is offered annually in the spring.

The Oregon Heritage Commission represents Oregon's heritage and geographical diversity. There are nine advisory representatives from state agencies and statewide organizations.



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