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WALLOWA COUNTY CHIEFTAIN



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CHIEF JOSEPH DAYS



Ellen Bishop/Special to the Chieftain

Jacob Stacey, of Moses Lake, Wash., finds only air to wrestle instead of a steer during Wednesday night's performance of Chief Joseph Days Rodeo 2017. The steer, who obviously has been watching a lot of basketball video, stopped. The horses and Stacey thundered past and the cowboy was in for a rough landing. By Saturday evening, word had gotten around the steer pen. Two more steers put on the brakes. Two more steer wrestlers bit the dust.



Paul Wahl/Chieftain

FOR MORE PHOTOS, SEE
PAGES 10 AND 13 INSIDE
THIS EDITION AND CATCH
ALL THE ACTION AT
WALLOWA.COM

Joseph Birkmaier leads his Darlin' Clementine along the route of the Chief Joseph Days Junior Parade Friday morning. A large crowd turned out for the event, which featured entries powered by the younger set.

Housing: The good, the bad, and the ugly

Editor's note: Last week the Chieftain began a multi-part examination of the housing crisis in Wallowa County. This week we look at the issues surrounding substandard housing and the process of requesting variances to zoning.

By Kathleen Ellyn
Wallowa County Chieftain

Any discussion about changing zoning in a community is met with concern by neighbors. When buying a house in an established subdivision, there are certain expectations — first and fore-

most that the neighbors will share the intent to improve and beautify the street, and as a result the property values will rise. "Property owners have fear and reservations," said Clarisse O'Conner, real estate agent for Timberline Realty in Wallowa County. "They have fear that things will change, and the new housing might not be kept up as well." To protect homeowners, no construction that deviates from established zoning is considered in either the county or cities without an application for a variance, which will trigger research by the planning commission and



Kathleen Ellyn/Chieftain

The discussion of the quality of housing in Wallowa County often centers around trailer homes; however, law enforcement officials say housing isn't necessarily a crime indicator.

probable consultation with a lawyer. Planning staff will then issue a recommendation. Moving forward, written notifications will go out to neighbors within at least one block informing them of a public meeting to be held before the city council. Depending on the response to that meeting, more research may be undertaken or more public meetings may be scheduled.

The council will be required to abide by established planning codes. In the city of Wallowa, for instance, only four extraordinary circumstances may result in consideration of a variance. "With good zoning, you should know what you're getting," said O'Conner. "Covenants, conditions and restrictions — typical for new

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SOURCE: U.S. Forest Service

Groups say corridor logging is excessive

Editor's note: This is the first in an occasional series

By Steve Tool
Wallowa County Chieftain

"We're not against logging," said Brian Kelly, restoration director of Greater Hells Canyon Council, formerly Hells Canyon Preservation Council. He makes the remark sitting at a picnic table at the Williamson Campground, deep in the heart of Lostine Canyon, the site of the U.S. Forest Service Lostine Corridor Public Safety Project. Kelly explained the organization's participation in a joint

lawsuit with Oregon Wild in U.S. District Court to stop the project. The U.S. Forest Service plans to remove hazardous trees from an 11-mile, 2100-acre stretch of road leading to the Eagle Cap Wilderness in the Lostine River Canyon. "We don't take this measure often," Kelly said. "This is the first lawsuit we've filed in four years." Among other things, the suit contends that the Forest Service used a loophole in the law, a categorical exclusion, to skirt having to perform a

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Pillar to post: Two incomes and no house

By Kathleen Ellyn
Wallowa County Chieftain

A two-income family with 10 years in Wallowa County is calling it quits after years of rental disasters. Karen — not her real name — and her husband and their three children have been from pillar to post in the county trying to find affordable housing that will allow them to remain and work here. They've given up. Karen has been transferred by her company to Lewiston, Idaho. But the national impact of the housing shortage may follow them. Already, Karen has learned that a house in Lewiston she applied to rent had 200 applicants. Karen's travails began when she moved to Wallowa County in 2007 with her first husband and two small children. "It took us six months to get a rental," she recalled. "We stayed with my mother until we got our first house in Joseph, and we lived there for five years. The rent was \$600 a month." Karen eventually divorced. Although she had a bachelor's degree and was employed full-time, as a single mother with



NO PLACE
LIKE HOME
Housing Challenge:
in Wallowa County

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COURT BEAT

Veteran convicted of domestic abuse

By Steve Tool
Wallowa County Chieftain

Craig Garrett Johnson, 32, Joseph, will spend time behind bars after a Wallowa County Circuit Court jury convicted him on two counts of domestic abuse and a count of unlawful use of a firearm after a three-day trial at Wallowa County District Court July 12-14. From the outset, Wallowa County Deputy District Attorney Rebecca Frolander relied heavily on emotional and graphic testimony from Brittany Garrett, who said she suffered abuse for years at the hands of her husband. The abuse included rape, assault, menacing and threats with a firearm. She said she only reported the crimes to law enforcement when she was concerned that the couple's son would suffer abuse after a July 2016 incident. That incident involved an argument over a bowl of dry cereal in which Brittany Garrett said that her husband had grabbed her roughly by the mouth during an argument, telling her, "your mouth will get you

killed" and later violently pulled her head back and forth by her hair as she held the couple's son. Court appointed attorney Jeffery Wallace's defense centered on Christopher Garrett's testimony. Garrett said that all the incidents were fabricated or blown out of proportion by his wife. Wallace also brought up the fact the Garrett was a wounded combat veteran who had served in Iraq. At least five times during the course of the trial, Wallace asked for a mistrial because Brittany Garrett detailed abuse incidents for which the defendant was not charged, which he said could prejudice the jury against his client. Judge Russell B. West denied all five motions although the third incident came with a stern warning to Frolander to curb the comments of her witness. On Thursday, the state rest its case after the testimony of four witnesses. The last two testified as to receiving text messages from Brittany Garrett regarding the alleged rape. Wallace moved for a judgment of acquittal on all

the charges, saying the state hadn't met the burden of proof beyond a reasonable doubt on any of the charges. Wallace won acquittal on the rape charge after noting that the complainant had changed the date of the incident from December 2015 to September or October of that year. He also said she had not verbally told him "no" or reported the act until July 2016. West acquitted the defendant, saying that the state had not proven the alleged crime was first-degree rape because the act had started consensually. He said the state had no law to cover the event described by the complainant, adding that in no way did his decision reflect the credibility of Brittany Garrett as to what happened. Frolander did not question the judge's decision. Wallace attempted to have his client's discharge papers from the service as well as his service record brought into evidence. Frolander objected, saying it

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