



THREE minutes with ...



CHERYL NORTH COUGHLAN

Executive Director, Josephy Center for Arts and Culture

Cheryl North Coughlan, 49, of Joseph is well-known in the community through her work as executive director of the Josephy Center for Arts and Culture in Joseph. It's a job she really enjoys and is passionate about, and that is important to her.

She graduated from high school in St. Louis, Mo., in 1986 and went to Bard College in the Hudson Valley outside of New York where she received her bachelor's degree in art.

After Bard, she moved to New York and worked at a public relations office that handled publicity for PBS and at a photo stock agency. It was during this time that she met husband Brian Coughlan, a fifth-generation Wallowa County boy who now owns Eastern Oregon Landscaping in Enterprise.

Brian had come to New York to visit his school chum Tyler Hays and stayed, working for an Internet company that did ticketing for symphonies. Cheryl and Brian met by chance and discovered they lived in the same neighborhood. They married in 1999.

They moved back to Wallowa County in 2001 with their two children, Ella, 16, and Henry, 13, and Cheryl worked as a court clerk at the Wallowa County Circuit Court for 10 years before moving to Josephy Center.

She enjoys doing things that benefit the community and is on the committee for The Big Read, joined the board at Josephy and worked on the board until hired and is on the board of the Wallowa County Chamber of Commerce. She's played a big part in making the Barn Tour Map, which should be completed in January.

Q. Why Wallowa County? You were a big city girl.

A. We came back because Brian had family here and once we got here we realized it's really an ideal place to raise kids and allows them more independence. I actually really like living in a small town. I am kind of a city person, but I like the dynamic of knowing everybody.

Q. What has Wallowa County taught you?

A. I think, Wallowa County has really taught me to have a good work ethic. A lot of people work really, really hard here whether they are working on ranches or at their jobs. A lot of people own their own businesses and they commit a lot of time, and that helped me come into this job. I was influenced by people who are really dedicated to what they are passionate about.

I think it's also taught me to appreciate the physical beauty of this place. I grew up in the suburbs and the city, and I think what makes this place special is the beauty and remoteness. We complain about the remoteness, but it's what makes it special. If we were an hour from Portland we wouldn't be the people we are.

Q. What is the first book you can remember checking out of a public library for yourself? And what book that you've read recently can you recommend?

A. "Where the Sidewalk Ends," by Shel Silverstein. I was seven or eight and checked it out of the University City Library in Missouri. I liked it because each page had a different story and there were drawings. For a kid it was humorous — for an adult it had a different side. I just read "A Gentleman in Moscow" by Amor Towles. I bought it at the Book-loft in Enterprise. It was funny and smart and a great story.

Excursion train enjoys a banner year

By Paul Wahl

Wallowa County Chieftain

Despite a truncated season due to fire concerns, the Eagle Cap Excursion Train had a record year.

A total of 1,671 passengers boarded for one of the weekend rides, according to information disseminated at the annual meeting of the Friends of the Joseph Branch Dec. 2 at the depot in Elgin.

The group's treasurer, Ralph Swinehart of Enterprise, reported \$105,400 in revenue was received to put against a total of \$76,000 in expenses. Much of the profit will go to Wallowa Union Rail Authority, which owns and operates the track on which the excursion train runs.

"This figure doesn't include money spent on motels and restaurants in the area by riders," Swinehart said. "It's quite an economic engine."



Chieftain file photo

The Eagle Cap Excursion Train makes a brief stop on one of its fall runs out of Elgin.

The authority was formed by Wallowa and Union counties in 2003 for future economic development potential to the region. In addition to the train, a railrider concession also operates seasonally on the line.

Each weekend ride has a theme, many of which resulted in sold-out crowds, according to Janet Dodson, who coordi-

nates sales and marketing for the excursion train.

Among the more popular were the wine and cheese and the wine and chocolate events, as well as the "train robbery" adventures.

The season kicks off with a Mother's Day ride, for which tickets are available, according to Dodson. A list of which themes will be part of next

year's schedule is expected to be posted around Jan. 1.

A number of "familiarization tours" were also hosted last year, including travel writers and photographers from around the country. Dodson said their work provides publicity it would otherwise be impossible for the friends to purchase.

For the first time this past year, the annual July 1 ride to honor and thank military service veterans was split into two rides. It was offered free to veterans, and more than 100 packed onto each of the runs.

A portion of the annual meeting was devoted to a discussion regarding recruiting additional members to the organization, especially those willing to volunteer for the weekend runs.

President Ed Spaulding said the only limit to boosting the group's success was having enough trained people willing to serve as hosts in one of the vintage rail cars.

Training includes an all-day first aid and safety unit, taught by Dick Burch of Joseph.

Although the group began with more than 200 members in 2004, that numbers has dwindled to around 80. Several of the original members remain active in the group, including Swinehart, Bill Oliver and Linda Cassady of Enterprise.

Significant efforts are underway to maintain and improve the rail cars used on the train. Several need new wheels.

Friends of the Joseph Branch are anticipating working to obtain used AMTRAK equipment for that purpose.

An authentic caboose has been obtained and returned to original condition. It will be added to the train in 2018.

Additional improvements in the condition of the track — including major repair of the bridge at Water Creek — will mean speedier and longer runs. The track travels

between Elgin and Joseph, but only a portion outside of Elgin is used for the excursion train. Maximum speed is 15 mph on that sector.

The donation of two semaphore blades to be erected near the Elgin depot was also announced at the annual meeting. The depot also serves as a railroad interpretive center.

A dinner train fundraiser for February 2018 is under consideration.

The excursion train dining car will be transformed with linen tablecloths and vintage china to recreate a grand historic adventure passengers during the '30s and '50s might have enjoyed.

Food served will be from original recipes that have been unearthed during research.

The group is also planning a showing of "The Polar Express" 6 p.m. Friday, Dec. 15, at the depot. Admission is nonperishable food items for the food bank. Free popcorn and cocoa will be served.

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