

# Looking forward to 2018



**WAHL TO WALL**  
Paul Wahl

Welcome to 2018. If you're like most people, there are several things you are looking forward to in the coming year.

Maybe it's a long-planned vacation or a special anniversary. Perhaps you're expecting a first grandchild in the new year.

I have several things I'm looking forward to this coming year.

In July, I will become the president of the Rotary Club of Wallowa County. It's an exciting challenge. The group is a fantastic collection of individuals who have made me feel at-home in a new place.

I look forward to taking the helm and guiding Rotary through a terrific year of community service.

Speaking of Rotary, mark your calendars for Feb. 9. That's the night the club will be sponsoring a Valentine's night out with lots of food and fun, including the opportunity to have your photo taken. It's not a fundraiser, it's a friend-raiser. Stay tuned for details.

**I AM** looking forward to my one-year anniversary as editor of the Chieftain. The first year at any newspaper is always a steep learning curve. You let out a big sigh of relief when you reach that point.

Suddenly, things are a lot more familiar, and you're not experiencing everything for the first time.

I was warned about summers in Wallowa County being a busy period. I was in no way prepared for it. Next year, I will be better prepared.

We didn't experience one event last summer that we didn't enjoy. Chief Joseph Days Rodeo was one highlight. We've attended many rodeos over the years, big and small. This rodeo is among the best in so many categories.

You have to wonder how the rodeo committee is going to top last year's event? The bar has been set mighty high.

**I AM** looking forward to the vote on the proposed library district in 2018. That will come in May.

A lot has been said and printed on the topic, and there's more to come as a stalwart group of folks work to convince taxpayers there is efficacy in publicly-funded libraries.

As a newspaper editor, I put a high priority on literacy. No readers, no newspapers. Literacy is a huge part of what the new library district would attempt to accomplish.

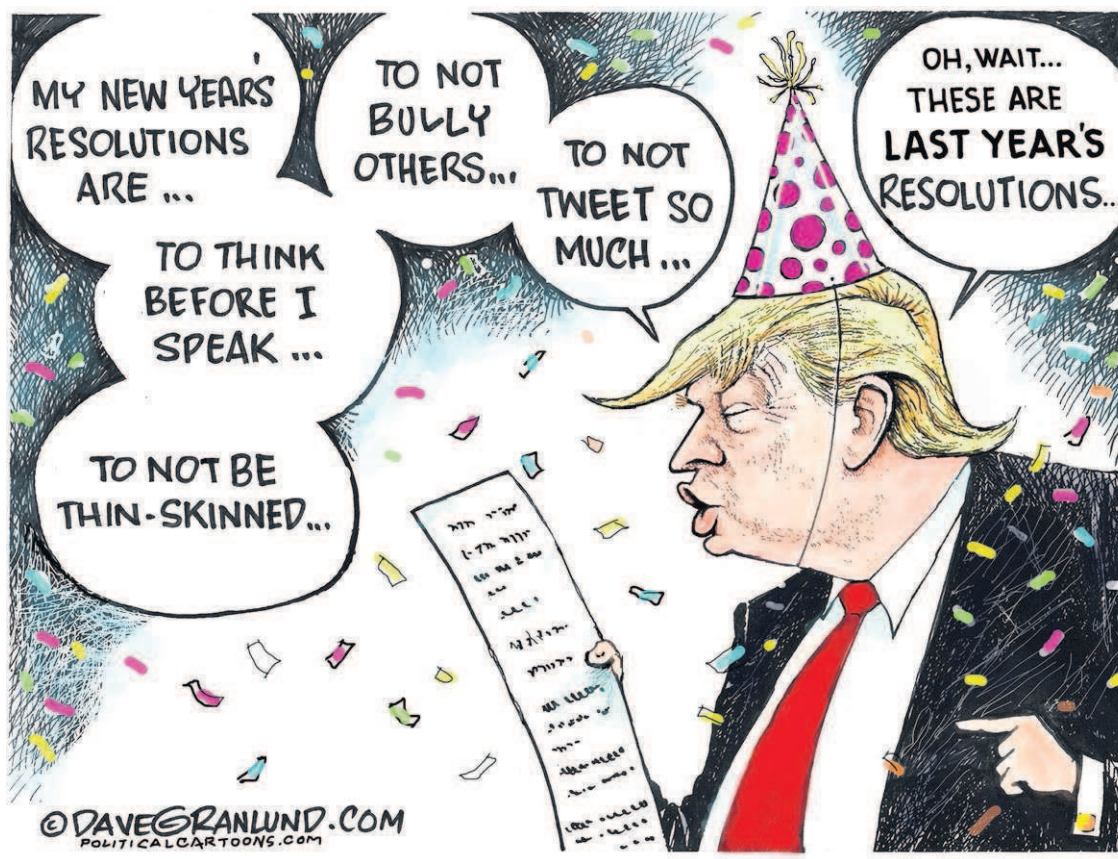
If you haven't educated yourself on the topic, please take time in these early weeks of the new year to seek out information. You'll be hearing a lot more about this as the new year dawns.

**I AM** looking forward to spending time at Wallowa Lake Park. Yeah, I know, it's not exactly a "get-away," but we haven't found anywhere else near or far that is as enjoyable a place to spend time.

Whether it's an evening walking the trails or a full-blown camping weekend, it's all spectacular — fun and relaxing.

We're already looking at dates for camping reservations. You have to plan and act early for the best spots.

If you're among those who believe a camping trip means driving three or more hours in one particular direction, I would encourage you to spend a weekend at Wallowa Lake. I guarantee you will enjoy it. Maybe you could camp next to us. We always have plenty of marshmallows to roast.



## It's such a cell phone thing

If I were to calculate the cost of my lost time looking for misplaced items, the amount would near a million dollars. I'm sure of it.

In early September, I misplaced my cell phone. Perhaps it's an internal message to "slow down" or "pay attention," but my angst in looking for it makes my concentration worse, not better.

Based on my history of finding lost items, I searched in my shoes, in the refrigerator and scoured my car. I suspected my pup Petey, but he took the fifth. I even raised the bed linens, careful not to disturb Mosie the cat, but did not see it.

My friends generously offered suggestions, most of which I had already examined. Nada. At 30 days, I surrendered and shopped for a new cell phone.

"I'd like one just like the one I lost," I told the sale representative.

The roll of her eyes communicated her disdain while, with great effort of politeness, she explained how outdated my old one was. This concerned me because that first smart phone was a great technological improvement from the flip phone I had used for years.

Side story: I lost that flip phone while hiking along Upper Imaha.



**WALLOWA GAL**  
Katherine Stickroth

Ten months later, a representative texted me on my new (at the time) phone asking if I had lost a cell phone.

"Yes."

"I have it here in Pasco."

"How'd you get it?"

"A lady found it last summer while hiking and just turned it in."

And that was it. No effort to return it to me. No further explanation ... I am left baffled at the odd things that happen.

So, this past October, I purchased another smart phone. (Smart phone is a misnomer, for they leave me feeling anything but.)

The next day while changing the sheets (I had to make Mosie move), there was the missing phone. She had been resting on it all the time. My friends who know Mosie agreed that was just like her to do that -- watch me fret over such a thing and not say a word to help. So cat.

My new phone anticipates what I'm going to say and literally inserts words into my communication that are not intended.

I was texting a mutual friend that I would not be attending a pot luck at Vickie's. Just as I hit send, I noticed, "Can't make it to Bucket's." Immediately I sent a second text with correction trying to explain what the phone was doing. "Phone toes for me." Another quick fix. "Talks not toes."

In preparing for the Veterans Day chili feed, I was texting a friend about sponsors who donated food and saw the phone interjected "good" donations. Exasperated, I sent off the correction, "Food not good."

"Why are you telling me the food is not good?" she responded.

This led to an audio phone call to clarify, which was difficult because I was laughing so hard.

Right now, two tin cans with a string connecting them looks quite appealing.

*Katherine Stickroth is a freelance writer who blogs at awallowagal.com.*

## They urge a 'yes' on Measure 101

More than one in 10 Wallowa County residents has health insurance because of Medicaid expansion.

These are working people — ranchers and farmers, store clerks and contractors — who cannot otherwise afford health care coverage.

These are the people whose access to health care, and whose health itself, could be severely impacted if Measure 101 fails.

A "yes" vote on Measure 101 supports the assessment of a fee on large hospitals and health insurers in the state and brings in three times that amount in federal funds. It is a way to maintain the state's Medicaid program at its current level for two years, giving the legislature time to work out a long-term solution.

Here in Wallowa County, providers will continue to care for our families, friends and neighbors regardless of the outcome on Measure 101.

However, a "no" vote may require cuts in services currently offered by local health care providers,



including the hospital and the full range of medical, dental and mental health clinics in the county.

Our local providers, due in part to Medicaid expansion, are working together to provide

some of the most innovative health care in Oregon. A "yes" on Measure 101 continues that good work.

Please vote "yes" on Measure 101 so that hard-working folks in Wallowa County can continue to access essential healthcare for themselves and their families.

**Nick Lunde**

*Joseph*

**Liz Powers**

*Enterprise*

*Lunde is board chairman, Wallowa County Healthcare District; and Powers is a family physician with Winding Waters Community Health Center.*

### Kudos for WHS girls basketball team

There is something very great about the Wallowa High School

girls' basketball team.

It doesn't have anything to do with scores or win-loss records or whether the stands are crowded with fans.

It's about excellence — and expressing it in what you do.

This is high school. When there's plenty of homework, who would go out for basketball when you know your school has had a losing record for years? Who? The girls of Wallowa.

At this writing, Wallowa stands at 2 wins, 9 losses on the season. Joseph is 7-2 and Enterprise 8-2.

But I've watched the Wallowa girls, 11 strong, at many games this season.

No matter what happens, they play the game. Hard. They're never lethargic.

Wallowa girls jump for the rebound. They race down the court. They shoot when there's an opening, no matter whether the last shot didn't go.

They never give up.

And that's what basketball — and the life they will face — is all about.

**Chuck Anderson**  
*Enterprise*

**L**etters to the Editor are subject to editing and should be limited to 275 words.

Writers should also include a phone number with their signature so we can call to verify identity. The Chieftain does not run anonymous letters.

In terms of content, writers should refrain from personal attacks. It's acceptable, however, to attack (or support) another party's ideas.

We do not routinely run thank-you letters, a pol-

icy we'll consider waiving only in unusual situations where reason compels the exception.

You can submit a letter to the Wallowa County Chieftain in person; by mail to P.O. Box 338, Enterprise, OR 97828; by email to editor@wallowa.com; or via the submission form at the newspaper's website, located at wallowa.com. (Drop down the "Opinion" menu on the navigation bar to see the relevant link).

# Extend CHIP funding; do it now



**GUEST COLUMN**  
Jeff Merkley

This year has been one of stark partisanship, with rhetoric from both sides of the aisle seeking to stress differences between Democrats and Republicans. But one thing I thought we all could agree on is that we need to do everything we can to look out for our children.

I see our responsibility and mission as legislators — and the core purpose of our Constitution — as ensuring children have safe spaces, full bellies and good health.

That's why I am outraged that the majority in Congress has refused to act to renew the Children's Health Insurance Program, commonly referred to as CHIP. For 20 years the program, with strong bipartisan support, has ensured that no children fall through the cracks of our health care system.

It provides states with funding to cover health care expenses for children whose families have incomes too high to qualify for Medicaid but too low to afford expensive private coverage.

Oregon's CHIP program, called Oregon Healthy Kids, last year helped more than 140,000 Oregon children access health care. Thanks to CHIP, 198 children from Wallowa County — that's 14 percent of children in the county — this year have been able to access check-ups, immunizations, dental care, doctors' visits, and other important health care services.

Funding for CHIP expired Sept. 30. Every single state in America — 50 out of 50 states — has a CHIP program. Oregon, along with five other states, will run out of CHIP money this month. Another 25 states will run out of CHIP money in the first three months of 2018.

It is completely unacceptable that the Congressional majority allowed CHIP to expire — and it's even more outrageous that they've waited 82 days and counting to reauthorize it.

Right now there is a bipartisan bill ready and waiting to be brought to the Senate floor. It would extend the Children's Health Insurance Program through 2022. It was passed by the Finance Committee with unanimous support.

The Senate could take up that bill right now and pass it. So what's the holdup? Why is health care for our children being disrupted?

The answer makes my blood boil: It is a pawn in cynical political machinations. The majority leadership in Congress is using the health and well-being of hundreds of children in Wallowa County and 9 million children across the country as a bargaining chip.

Instead of taking up this bipartisan bill, they're holding it hostage to try to win concessions in budget negotiations. The most the majority is willing to give our children is a paltry three-month extension of the program that was included in a continuing appropriations bill. Three months is unacceptable; we need to create stability and reliability for our children by reauthorizing this program for years to come.

The holidays are around the corner, and no parents should have to worry at this time of year that an illness or injury could endanger their child's life or family's finances. I am urging my Senate colleagues on both sides of the aisle to urgently prioritize issues that are essential to working folks — like ensuring the children who rely on CHIP can keep getting the care they need.

There is no reason I can see that we shouldn't be able to agree that protecting health care for 9 million children across the country is an absolute top priority. That is our responsibility. That should be our mission. We must get it done. Nine million American children are waiting.

*Jeff Merkley represents Oregon in the U.S. Senate.*