

# BASH IS BACK

Crowd doubles from last year's inaugural event

By Steve Tool  
Wallowa County Chieftain

Thunderclouds on the horizon didn't dampen the spirits of the nearly 1,000 people who attended the second Back Country Bash Aug. 4 at the Chief Joseph Days rodeo grounds.

Event organizers had a hefty main lineup of three alt-country acts, including Shane Smith and the Saints out of Austin, Texas; Corb Lund of Alberta, Canada, and Reckless Kelly, lately of Austin, but with Idaho and Oregon roots.

Local singer-songwriter An American Forrest (Forrest Van Tuyl) and guitar virtuoso Mark Kroos served as the show's opening acts. Van Tuyl played his usual set of tasteful and original western songs with a heavy emphasis on the joys of life on horseback. The dexterous Kroos wowed the audience with his mastery of the double neck acoustic guitar, on occasion even playing two songs simultaneously.

Shane Smith and the Saints served

up plenty of high-powered alt-country, which featured fiddle playing to give the audience a taste of their roots and how it's done in Texas. The group served as a perfect forerunner for the following act, Corb Lund.

Although headliner Reckless Kelly is possibly more widely known than Lund, Wallowa County attendees seemed to appreciate the Canadian, whose background is in the ranch life, often the subject of his songs.

He professed his main interests as "horses, guns and whiskey," much to the crowd's delight. The thunderous applause that met Lund when he asked if the crowd would like him to return indicated the distinct possibility of another visit.

Headliner Reckless Kelly is at the forefront of the alt-country movement, and the size of the crowd that pressed up to the stage at the beginning of their set indicated the audience was well aware of the fact. The five-member group, led by brothers Willy and Cody Braun, showed the audience why they're on top.

Lead singer Willy Braun mesmerized the audience with his sparkling voice and commanding stage presence with able vocal help from brother, Cody and the excellent musi-



Steve Tool/Wallowa County Chieftain

**Corb Lund, who has an authentic ranching background, wows the Back Country Bash attendees.**

cianship of the other band members. They laid out a blueprint of how to serve as the backbone of a top-notch band. Audience enthusiasm was so high, the band played well past their allotted stage time.

OK Theatre owner Darrel Brann, who also served as one of the concert promoter, said that the show met expectations and then some.

"We haven't gotten in the total numbers yet, but I think we were up near 1,500 people there, which is pretty close to doubling what we had last year," he said. "Everyone was really pleasant, and the bands were happy to be there. They really loved the crowd and the energy coming from it."

Brann said the success of the event was a probable indicator that the event would return next year and possibly expand in the future. The concert series is presented by the Chief Joseph Days Rodeo Committee.

## MCQUEAD

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When McQuead came to the city offices back in 2012, she knew "very little," she said.

She'd trained in dental assisting, radiology and business, but had no idea what she really wanted to do with her future.

"I just walked in one day, and they were looking for help," she recalled. "I took messages, maintained the office, helped customers, and that was it."

When Janet Livingston retired in 2013, Young asked McQuead if she'd like to stay on — and in that short amount of time, McQuead had discovered her calling.

"I think it was the customers," she said. "I'm from Wallowa County born and raised. My kids were in school here, and I thought it was a great opportunity."

There was something even greater kindling in McQuead's heart, and Young apparently saw it. It was a passion for the future of the city.

Young nurtured that flame, opening a lot of doors in different areas for McQuead over the following five years, sending her for trainings and expanding her responsibilities. By the time Young retired, McQuead was the human resources director in addition to administrative assistant.

And she was Young's trusted right hand.

"She made it possible for me to have this opportunity," McQuead said. "Knowing that Michele had been here for almost 30 years at that time and seeing her passion and drive, I was very interested in having that same thing."

She has big shoes to fill. "Michelle had this thought in her mind that she wanted to build a foundation for progress in the city," McQuead said. "She wanted the infrastructure of the city to be what it needed to be for progress. I think that is my hope for the future of the city — to continue the progress."

When the advertisement went out for a new city administrator, 13 individuals picked up applications. But the list of responsibilities is daunting. In the end, only McQuead applied.

"There was a unanimous confidence about her abilities among the councilors," said city councilor Micah Agnew. "I am thrilled that she's taken on this role. She has displayed incredible competence and passion for the position. I think she'll continue to do a fantastic job."

Mayor Stacey Karvoski was equally unequivocal in her praise.

"I think she's going to be great," Karvoski said. "She's already been an asset to the city and I think she'll continue to be an asset. She's a great team player and she does a great job."

## HEALTH

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Most of the examples Word shared with the subcommittee included televised hook-ups utilized by patients from the hospital. In-home hook-ups between patients and providers will require expanded broadband Internet service.

"Moving forward, reliable, affordable broadband in homes and remote rural hospitals and clinics will be critical as we transform the current health-care delivery system," Word told the committee. "We are fortunate in Wallowa County to have good broadband infrastructure; but, even so, our county has many remote areas that do not yet have broadband connectivity."

By one estimate, the county is among the 10 Oregon counties with the highest digital divide index — least

likely to have broadband connectivity in the home.

Lack of high-speed availability isn't the only issue. The use of telemedicine has outpaced governmental regulations on health care.

"Medicare reimbursement has been the really problematic piece," said Katherine Britain, executive director of Telehealth Alliance of Oregon in Mill City, east of Salem. Word is a member of the group's board.

Only recently have reimbursements been approved, and Britain said Medicare has signaled a willingness to expand coverage to include telehealth sessions.

"Medicare does not reimburse for remote patient monitoring, a potentially vital tool in monitoring patients with chronic conditions ..." Word told the subcommittee. "Providers would like these geographic and setting location

### HOW TELEMEDICINE WORKS AT WALLOWA MEMORIAL

**A baby is delivered at the hospital by a family practice physician during a snowstorm on a January night. The closest Neonatal Intensive Care Unit is more than 150 miles away.**

**Roads out of the county were closed early in the day due to ice, and snow has been falling off and on for most of the day. An hour after delivery, the newborn is struggling to breathe, and oxygen levels are lower than normal.**

**The physician has been on the phone with a neonatologist who recommends transferring the baby to a NICU, but due to weather, neither a fixed-wing plane**

**nor a helicopter is able to land, and road conditions are not safe enough to make the four-hour highway trip.**

**The solution: The hospital was able to use a telemedicine robot to allow the neonatologist to assess the newborn throughout the next week. He was able to listen to the baby's heart, lungs and belly. He could see the baby's color, hear its breathing and talk with the parents.**

**The hospital was able to provide all the care necessary. The family avoided Life Flight surgery and NICU costs. The baby was discharged a week later.**

requirements eliminated and expansion of the types of technology that can be used, and coverage for all services that are safe to provide."

Another issue has been requirements imposed on doctors.

"Many states did not

allow the use of telemedicine to deliver services and even more problematic were the restrictions around cross-state licensure," Britain said. "These restrictions would have made it nearly impossible for hospitals like Wallowa Memorial to receive services

telemedically from a hospital like St. Alphonsus in Boise — across the Oregon border.

Other challenges to full implementation include cost of equipment, training, security and privacy issues and cultural acceptance.

"It often requires starting small with a single application, a lot of education, engaging telehealth 'evangelists' and

developing a successful strategy that all can support," Britain added. "Wallowa Memorial has done much of that work, and its telehealth success reflects that."

Wallowa County's Winding Waters Clinic has also been dipping its toe in the telemedicine stream.

The clinic purchased a telehealth "robot" through a Greater Oregon Behavioral Health Inc. grant in 2016. Wallowa Valley Center for Wellness and Wallowa Memorial have similar units.

It is most often used to connect patients to specialists, according to Meg Bowen, Quality Director for Winding Waters a nonprofit community health center in Enterprise,

Bowen said the clinic would also like to see in-home uses where sufficient Internet speed permits.

"Being able to log into medical services from the comfort of their home would greatly enhance the experience of our patients," Bowen added.



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