

WALLOWA COUNTY CHIEFTAIN



Ellen Morris Bishop

CEO and Administrator Larry Davy, has guided Wallowa Memorial Hospital to a ranking in the 100 top Critical Access Hospitals in the nation for the third straight year.

Hospital in top 100 (again)

By Ellen Morris Bishop
Wallowa County Chieftain

Wallowa Memorial Hospital has been ranked among the top 100 critical access hospitals of the 5,000 critical access hospitals in the U.S. according to the annual rankings of the Chartis Center for Rural Hospitals. The results of the survey were published in *Modern Health Care*, a weekly magazine that covers business news for the health care industry. St. Alphonsus Hospital in Baker City was the only other Oregon hospital to be recognized in the rankings. "It's kind of nice to be reassured that Wallowa County is a good place to work, a good place to live," said hospital CEO and Administrator Larry Davy.

The Wallowa Memorial Hospital has been ranked 6th in the nation as a critical access hospital for the past two years. In September, they'll find out exactly where they are in the 2019 rankings.

A Critical Access hospital is a designation by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services under the Medicare Rural Hospital Flexibility Program to ensure that people living in very rural areas are able to access hospital services. They must provide 24-hour emergency care services seven days a week, and meet specific on-site response timeframes for on-call staff.

According to the Chartis Center for Rural Hospitals, institutions in the top 100 critical access hospitals cultivate unique cultures that encourage excellent communication among employees and between physicians and patients, along with providing high-quality health care and safety at a lower cost. The Chartis Center notes that the top facilities had high-performing leaders who help assure excellence and efficiency throughout the organization.

But Davy has a different idea. "You can't earn that award just through management or leadership. The quality of work comes from the employees, staff, and physicians that we have, and who are doing a phenomenal job. It's a big family," he said.

Communication among his staff is really important to Davy.

"We've worked really hard on making sure everybody in the group knows what's going on. We really value the input and suggestions of employees. They have some of the best and most innovative ideas."

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'MY FAMILY'S LIVING IN A 5TH-WHEEL RIGHT NOW WHILE WE'RE BUILDING. THAT TAKES PRIORITY OVER ANY OTHER PROJECT.'

Andy McKee, contractor and property owner

McKee readies for Litch Building overhaul

Steve Tool
Wallowa County Chieftain

Andy McKee, the sometimes controversial contractor and property owner is ready to begin the renovation of the Litch Building, located at the corner of West Main and River Streets. McKee and his brother, Todd, bought the property in 2017. Some citizens have voiced complaints that the McKees, who are working on a number of Wallowa County projects, have overextended themselves and couldn't afford to complete the project. Not true, according to McKee. In fact he recently received a matching funds Main Street Grant through Oregon's State Historic Preservation Office, to the tune of \$200,000.

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The Litch Building, at the corner of River and Main Streets in Enterprise, was built originally in 1903, and is undergoing remodeling by Andy McKee.

Work begins on Wallowa Mountain Loop Road

Will be completed in November

By Ellen Morris Bishop
Wallowa County Chieftain

Road construction on the \$8 million dollar Wallowa Mountain Loop Road Project is scheduled to begin June 17, 2019. Construction should be completed by November 13, 2019. The project starts at the intersection of the Wallowa Mountain Loop Road and the Joseph-Imnaha Highway (OR 350), and continues five miles south to the USFS Wallowa Whitman National

Forest boundary. The project is funded mostly by the Federal Lands Access Program (FLAP), with additional contributions from the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board (OWEB). Wallowa County is contributing 10.27 percent of the total 8 million dollar budget, Commissioner Susan Roberts said.

Perhaps the most important component of the project is construction of a new single-span bridge over Sheep Creek and realignment of the highways' intersection. The work will transform the present severely-angled intersection into a safer and more

conventional "T" intersection, including a right-hand turn lane as you approach the intersection from Joseph. The bridge will replace three culverts that are an impediment to fish passage, and is partly funded by a grant from OWEB. Completing the bridge in a timely manner is an important goal of the project.

Roberts said that the contractor, High Desert Aggregate, was chosen because they met all the criteria placed on the project by the funder, FLAP. "The road will stay pretty much in its present footprint," Roberts said. "The contractor will grind

off the asphalt, and then resurface it where it is now. There might be new guard rails and other improvements, but it will not make the road wider or change its alignment." It will certainly make it smoother, she added.

The project is administered by the Federal Highway Administration, Vancouver, Washington. The contractor is High Desert Aggregate and Paving, Terrebonne, Oregon.

Roberts noted that there are several other road projects slated for this summer in Wallowa County. They include resurfacing Highway 82 between Joseph and

Enterprise, Reconstruction of the Zumwalt Road to the Forest Service boundary, and of course the realignment of the highway along the Minam Grade. "The Zumwalt Road will be given a new gravel surface," Roberts said. "When it was built, it was planned to be a paved road. but that never happened. The roadbed now doesn't have much in the way of fine particles to hold the larger pieces of gravel together. So the gravel just spreads out to the sides of the road." The Zumwalt Road contractor is already on-site, and may begin work as early as next week.

