



## Wallowa County Voices



**Ann Bloom**  
Enterprise

### Recycling is important for the county

ENTERPRISE — Ann Bloom moved to Wallowa County in 2004 after she grew tired of her job in Portland, and wanted to return to the landscape she grew to love during childhood visit with her family.

Today, she works for the Oregon State University Extension Service in Enterprise teaching nutrition to first- through sixth-grade students in Joseph and Wallowa. She also serves as the education director for the Wallowa County Recycling Task Force.

#### Why is recycling important for Wallowa County?

It helps keep all of the things we are recycling out of the landfill. That means the landfill will have a longer life.

#### You are the education director for the recycling task force. What does that entail?

I help write grants, for one thing. If I can ever get back into the schools, I'll be teaching the younger kids about recycling and helping them place the correct item in the right bin. For example, colored paper is different from white paper and from cardboard.

#### What have you learned from living in Wallowa County?

The biggest thing is that if someone is in need of something or help or has a problem, even if somebody doesn't know you, they step up and help you. It's a pay-it-forward kind of attitude here. The way that it goes is that everybody steps forward.

#### What advice do you have for anyone who's thinking of moving here?

Pretty much the same advice everyone else has: Investigate the cost of living, find a job, find work before you buy a home. But I did it on a leap of faith. I found a house here, bought it, put mine on the market in Portland and within six months I was here. I worked a lot of odd jobs until I got on with the Extension Service.

#### What's your favorite spot in the county.

It's gotta be the lake. When I was a kid, we came here to do backpacking, and after that we would ride rented horses at the pack station, we did the bumper cars, we ate hamburgers. So I have a lot of good memories there.

— Ellen Morris Bishop  
Wallowa County Chieftain

# Classes are in session

## After uncertain summer, Wallowa County students go back to school

By Bill Bradshaw  
Wallowa County Chieftain

ENTERPRISE — Wallowa County schools were ready and rarin' to go to this week to get back in class for the 2020-21 school year. Schools opened Tuesday, Sept. 8, in Enterprise, Joseph and Wallowa.

Superintendents at all three districts have overseen the new realities of educating amid the COVID-19 pandemic, which forced schools to close early for the year in March.

"I'm ecstatic to have the 2020-21 school year start," said Erika Pinkerton, superintendent of the Enterprise School District. "The staff have worked diligently for both online learning and on-site learning to take place to provide a high-quality education in a safe environment."

"We feel like we are ready," Lance Homan, superintendent of Joseph Charter School said Thursday, Sept. 3. "There's things we have to tweak, but we feel like we're ready to go."

"We are more than ready,"



A first-grade student raises her hand with a question Tuesday, Sept. 8, 2020, as teacher Jordan Hook explains the procedures to be followed during a "mask break" at Enterprise Elementary School. Sept. 8, 2020, was the first day of regular classes since schools across Oregon were closed over the coronavirus pandemic in March.

Staff photos by Bill Bradshaw

said Tammy Jones, superintendent of the Wallowa School District.

In fact, she said, they've been doing some early gatherings ahead of the regular start of school.

"This week has been one-on-one conferences with families and teachers about what school will be like," Jones said. On Thursday morning, "We had a soft-opening where all the kids ... got bags with things they could use in (a) photo booth and parents took pictures."

They also had "a kind of cel-

ebration outside," she said, with a "get-to-know-you time."

The schools all will maintain state guidelines for gatherings particularly at schools. Among those are face masks in most situations — including during sports play, a limit of one student per 35 square feet of space and organizing students into "cohorts" of no more than 50. The cohort restriction applies to students, teachers and staff. Plexiglas barriers will be set up in some areas.

"During the day, I can interact with no more than 50 peo-

ple," Jones said.

Homan said that as expected, there are changes.

"They're lot more spread out than normal," he said, adding that that will be something for teachers and staff to enforce. "We know kids will probably be closer at times."

He said the schools must undertake cleaning measures "more intense and more often."

One such area will be during lunchtime in the cafeteria. He said students will be allowed in

See Schools, Page A8

**"HOLD OUT YOUR ARMS AND IF YOU'RE TOUCHING SOMEONE, YOU'RE TOO CLOSE."**

— Tammy Jones, superintendent of the Wallowa School District



Two masked students walk away from the buses Tuesday, Sept. 8, 2020, to enter Joseph Charter School as they start on a new school year. "We feel like we are ready," Lance Homan, superintendent of Joseph Charter School said. "There's things we have to tweak, but we feel like we're ready to go."

## COVID-19 creates mental health challenges in county, nation

### There are ways to lift spirits, even in a pandemic

By Ellen Morris Bishop  
Wallowa County Chieftain

ENTERPRISE — If the whole COVID-19 thing has you feeling depressed, frustrated and anxious, you are not alone.

A just-released study from the Boston University School of Public Health has found that depression has increased threefold nationally. Counselors in Wallowa County have found similar mental health issues here. And they have

some suggestions for ways to lift your spirits.

"We are starting to see the fatigue that sets in from our real-life experience called the COVID pandemic," said Mollie Cudmore, a Wallowa Valley Center for Wellness counselor. "It has become one of the most challenging mental health obstacles I have witnessed in the past 20 years."

Cudmore, a licensed clinical social worker and the school counselor in the Enterprise schools, has seen a significant uptick in anxiety and depression here, along with other problems including

See Mental health, Page A8

### TIPS FOR BETTER MENTAL HEALTH DURING THE PANDEMIC

- Your words matter: choose them wisely. Be curious about your children and who they are as people. I am wondering ... how do you feel about COVID and what impact does it have on you? Allow them the chance to speak and listen without shame or judgement.
- Play with movement and engage with other people including your kids. Humans need relationships.
- Slow down and be intentional with thoughtful mindful living.
- Take a negativity "fast" from toxic relationships and social media.
- Ask yourself: What is the lesson we can learn from this experience?
- Be creative with your activities and go outside more. Activities to do with each other: hiking, bike riding, golf, frisbee golf, other activities outside.
- Focus on what you can control and not what you can't. Life is uncomfortable. Pull up a seat and settle in. Kids take cues from you and how you act. Your reaction is how they will react.
- Grow gratefulness. Find 5 things you are grateful for each day.
- Enjoy the simple pleasures of life.
- If you need to talk with someone, or help solving a problem, call the Wallowa Valley Center for Wellness at 541-426-4524.

— Wallowa Valley Center for Wellness

