

Wallowa Memorial Hospital is again among the nation's best

By RONALD BOND
Wallowa County Chieftain



Wallowa County Chieftain, File

Wallowa Memorial Hospital was named a Top 100 Critical Access Hospital for the fifth year in a row and eighth time in 11 years.

ENTERPRISE — It's an award Wallowa Memorial Hospital has become accustomed to earning.

Earlier this month, the hospital was included in the nationwide list of the Top 100 Critical Access Hospitals, the fifth year in a row and eighth time in 11 years it has received the honor, according to a press release.

"We would not have this success without the continued support of the board, the Wallowa Valley Health Care Foundation and our community," hospital CEO Larry Davy said in the release. "Their unwavering support ensures that we have the equipment we need to allow us to continue to add to, and further develop the services that we offer here in Wallowa County."

Three of those past four years, the hospital has been in the top 20, according to WMH Communications Director Brooke Pace. Last year, it had a percentile rating of 99.7, according to a November 2020 *Chieftain* article.

The Top 20 list comes out later this year. She told the *Chieftain* that of 25 critical-access hospitals in Ore-

gon, only three made the top 100 nationwide list.

"The Top 100 program continues to illuminate strategies and innovation for delivering higher-quality care and better outcomes within rural communities," Michael Topchik, National Leader of The Chartis Center for Rural Health, said in the press release. "We are delighted to be able to spotlight the efforts of these facilities through the INDEX framework."

Davy elaborated on the impact of the community, foundation and the board, as well as praised the staff for its efforts.

"As far as the foundation goes, they've raised seven figures dollar-wise over the years, and that's been a focus (directed to) equipment or staff training. When you have the most current, best (equipment), whether it's a mammogram machine, a bone density machine, CAT scan, lab equipment ... that

is huge for staff to do a top-notch job," he said in an interview with the *Chieftain*. "Great equipment has a great result. Rural hospitals really struggle with funding and equipment.

"The foundation can't do its role without the community. This community has been phenomenal for decades ... Our board has been very committed to investment. Just having a fairly new hospital is a huge undertaking, and expanding

services. What we offer people within Wallowa County and outside ... They consistently invest millions of dollars a year.

"The other two factors of that ... you gotta have terrific staff and providers to take that to the next step with the personal touch with patients."

The CEO said that part of what has helped the hospital build to the level it maintains is a deal with international registrar Det Norske Veritas to be accredited annually, rather than every three years by the state.

"They come every single year, and they go through everything," Davy said of DNV, which is headquartered in Norway. "We felt like we wanted to make ourselves more accountable."

Davy, who is in his second stint as the hospital CEO, said it hadn't been accredited for about five years prior to his return in 2014.

"That's been huge," he said of the contract with DNV. "We've done that for, I think, four years."

Pace also pointed to the community support and efforts of the staff as reasons for the hospital consistently being near the top of the nation.

"I would definitely say the community support, and Larry is always very modest, but I would say that (it also happens) through fantastic strategic planning and evaluation of community needs," she said. "We do the community needs assessment every two years to see what is lacking. Strategically, that is our highest priority."

Davy said among the areas the hospital is always analyzing is how to keep costs down, and how to become more efficient.

"Maybe you have a process that takes 20 steps — how do you reduce it to 8-10, which saves money?" he said. "How do your scheduled clinics so the customer doesn't have to wait much? (How do you get) them through quicker? There's a lot of efficiency things ..."

"One thing businesses have done is try to reduce the supply they have at any one time ... The downside of that is COVID hit, and we didn't have masks. Then you are always countered by wages, benefits, our insurances going through the roof, a lot of costs going through the roof. I think in summary, it's squeezing waste out of the system as best we can."

IN BRIEF

Business planning workshop set

ENTERPRISE — A free six-week workshop to help entrepreneurs and small-business owners build the basis for a successful business called "Business Foundations" will take place on Wednesdays, beginning March 31 and running through May 5.

The classes will run from 6-8:30 p.m.

Classes are conducted via videoconference by Lisa Dawson, who has taught Business Foundations for more than 10 years. This hands-on class covers the basics of running a successful business: overhead and inventory costs, goal-setting and sales projection, marketing, taxes and licensing and other considerations, and brings it all together in a business plan.

Register at www.neoedd.org or call the Wallowa County Chamber of Commerce at 541-426-4622.

Learn to create a business destination

ENTERPRISE — Two opportunities for the multiple-session Destination Creation course are being offered by the Northeast Oregon Economic Development District in coming weeks.

The courses are held from 5:30-7:30 p.m. on Mondays and Thursdays from March 29 to April 22 or April 26 to May 20.

Participants will learn to use strategy and tools to keep local customers spending money with their busi-

nesses and start drawing customers from well beyond the immediate marketplace in this workshop for business owners.

Learn how to change a business into a consumer destination that is consistently preferred by customers, helping a business capture more market share, even when larger, better-capitalized competitors seemingly have the advantage.

This series will provide the framework for how to think about a business, the changes needed to pivot to online sales and how to position a business to become a destination that customers will frequent during the time of COVID and beyond.

To register, visit <https://www.neoedd.org/events>.

For more information, visit www.neoedd.org or call the Wallowa County Chamber of Commerce at 541-426-4622.

Class on Adding Color to Copper planned

JOSEPH — A new art class called Adding Color to Copper is being offered by the Josephy Center for Arts and Culture in Joseph, to be held Saturday, April 24 from 1-4 p.m.

Those interested in participating must register by April 20 at <https://preview.tinyurl.com/CopperColor>. Cost for the class is \$50. Register now, as the class size is limited to six persons.

The class will be held in an in-person format at the Josephy Center at 403 N. Main St. Face masks are required.

Under the instruction of Dona Miller, participants will learn the basics of adding color to metal through enameling. Enameling uses

finely ground glass that is fused to the metal using a heat source such as a torch or kiln. Small torches will be used in the class.

Anyone who has a small torch they are comfortable with and like to use is welcome to bring it to class. There will be tools available for use in class. The class will be working with copper and powdered enamels.

No experience necessary.

For more information, contact the Josephy Center at 541-432-0505 or info@josephy.org.

Local students earn collegiate academic accolades

WALLOWA COUNTY — Johnelle Suto was among 53 students to complete degree requirements from Mount Mary University in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, following the fall 2020 semester, the school

recently announced.

Suto, a graduate of Joseph Charter School, earned her bachelor of science in biology from the Catholic university.

Also, eight graduates of Wallowa County high schools were recently named to Eastern Oregon University's Dean's List for the 2020 fall term.

To make the Dean's List, a student must have a grade-point average of at least 3.5 and complete a minimum of 12 hours of graded coursework.

From Enterprise, the Dean's List students were Dylan Edwards, Amy Kiesecker and Madison McDowell.

From Joseph, Paige Hunting, Gracie Niezen, Heidi Niezen and Ella Coughlan made the Dean's List.

And from Wallowa, Rylee Goller earned the honor.

— Chieftain staff

This week's featured book
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by Kazuo Ishiguro

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SCHOLASTIC HONORS

Johnelle Suto, a graduate of Joseph Charter School, completed degree requirements from Mount Mary University in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, following the fall 2020 semester. Eight graduates of Wallowa County high schools were recently named to Eastern Oregon University's Dean's List for the 2020 fall term: EHS graduates Dylan Edwards, Amy Kiesecker and Madison McDowell; JCS graduates Paige Hunting, Gracie Niezen, Heidi Niezen and Ella Coughlan; and WHS graduate Rylee Goller.

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