



Wallowa County Voices



**Brianna
Micka**
Enterprise

Aiming for teaching degrees

ENTERPRISE — Brianna Micka was born and raised in Wallowa County and lives with her parents on Alder Slope.

She's now a senior at Joseph Charter School, where she plays basketball and volleyball. After graduation this year, she hopes to go to Eastern Oregon University or Oregon State University and obtain a double major in elementary education and agriculture education.

"I want to be an agriculture teacher, but I want to come back to the county so if I'm an elementary teacher, that gives me more options," she said.

The ag education goes along with her own experience. She's been in 4-H since the fourth grade and started FFA as a freshman. She's now chapter vice president at JCS.

Her parents are Jeff and Brenda Micka. Her dad is a flooring installer and her mom works at the Wallowa County Courthouse.

Micka recently shared her thoughts about living in Wallowa County.

What's your favorite thing about Wallowa County?

Probably the views and the people. I like coming back home, even from a great vacation, the people here make it so wonderful and they're so supportive and you just really come together as a community.

How has the COVID-19 pandemic affected you?

It's affected me pretty greatly with school and sports. It's definitely changed things and especially changed my senior year from what it was supposed to look like.

Do you plan to get the vaccine against COVID-19 or are you hesitant as some people are?

I'm not sure yet. I'm not in a category for it yet, and I'd like there to be more testing. But if I need it to travel or for college, then I'll take it.

Which vaccine do you prefer?

I haven't done a lot of research, but I think I'd take the Johnson & Johnson one that just came out if I have to take one — the one-shot one.

What have you learned from living in Wallowa County?

I've learned so much about what a community can do and how they come together. Everything that's ag related here has helped me so much. People want to go to the city to see what they have, but it seems in a small community we have just as much, it's just a little bit different what we do.

What's your advice for people who are thinking about moving here?

It's a strong, small community, so I'd say just keep it how we love it. Don't try to change everything, but if they want to come and enjoy it, they can enjoy it, too. Have an agriculture-based mind and enjoy the beauty we have here.

— Bill Bradshaw,
Wallowa County Chieftain

Preparing for the 'MONSTER'

Wallowa Schools put \$2.2M seismic grant to work

By ELLEN MORRIS BISHOP
For the Wallowa County Chieftain

WALLOWA — Wallowa may look like a placid little town, but there's a monster lurking underground just a few miles to the southeast. The Wallowa School District is outfitting its Cougar Dome to ensure safety for students and a safe haven for the community should the monster ever strike.

The "monster" is the nearly 40-mile-long Wallowa fault and related faults that define the Lostine and other river valleys, as well as other parts of the Blue Mountains. Historic seismic activity in Wallowa County has produced only magnitude 5 and smaller quakes, many have been centered around Joseph.

In January, two magnitude 2 quakes occurred six to seven miles WSW of Lostine, and were felt by local residents. Although no fault scarps younger than 17,000 years have been found, some geologists, notably U.S. Geological Survey's Gary Mann, consider the Wallowa fault, which has been active for about 12 million years, to be capable of a magnitude 7 quake.

The Wallowa School District is addressing this potential threat with a \$2,287,425 Seismic Rehabilitation Grant. The grant, awarded in May 2020, is funded by



Ellen Morris Bishop/For the Wallowa County Chieftain
Geotechnical drillers Michael and Marvis Remboldt examine a core sample they drilled on the west side of the Wallowa High School Cougar Dome on Tuesday, March 16, 2021.

state bonds, administered by Business Oregon, a state agency that helps develop livable and prosperous communities.

The district chose the Cougar Dome, constructed in 1949, for the project's seismic retrofit rather than the century-old, brick high school. A seismic retrofit of the more vulnerable high school was estimated at \$8.1 million, far above the grant program's \$2.5 million limit. The

Cougar Dome also was deemed a place where the community could shelter in any emergency, seismic or otherwise.

"We're underway with the evaluation work," school Superintendent Tammy Jones said. "Right now, we are into schematic design."

The project is expected to include roof, wall and floor/foundation strengthening and construction, Jones said.

But actual construction won't proceed until next summer.

"We could be full-bore and do the construction for the seismic this summer and be done," Jones said. "But the work doesn't have to be done until September of 2022. We are waiting to hear on the bond because combining the seismic work and the bond-funded renovation

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Money raining down on county, cities

More than \$2.25M in federal relief coming; terms still uncertain

By BILL BRADSHAW
Wallowa County Chieftain

WALLOWA COUNTY — More than \$2.25 million is slated to come to Wallowa County and its four incorporated cities out of the \$1.9 trillion COVID-relief bill signed by President Joe Biden on March 11, and is being distributed to local governments, according to the office of U.S. Democratic Sen. Jeff Merkley.

Of that amount, \$1.398 million is going to Wallowa County. Enterprise will receive \$410,000, Joseph is to get nearly \$230,000, Wallowa gets \$170,000 and Lostine is to receive \$50,000, Merkley's office stated.

CNBC online reported that the federal aid package includes direct payments of \$1,400 each to most Americans, many of which have already been distributed. It also extends a \$300 per week unemployment boost until Sept. 6 and expands the child tax credit for a year. It will also put nearly \$20 billion into COVID-19 vaccinations, \$25 billion into rental and utility assistance and \$350 billion into state, local and tribal relief. The legislation will also increase the maximum Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (food stamps) benefit by 15% through September and direct nearly \$30 billion to restaurants. It will send more than \$120 billion to K-12 schools.

Wallowa County Commissioner Susan Roberts said Thursday, March 25, that the money should come directly from the federal government about 60 days after Biden signed the bill. She said, however, that while counties and larger cities



Bill Bradshaw illustration/Wallowa County Chieftain

will receive the payments directly from the feds, smaller towns — like the four in Wallowa County — will receive theirs through the state government.

"My understanding is that these payments are directly to the counties," she said.

Roberts said, as she understands

not counting her chickens before they're hatched.

"I'm not going to venture an idea (on how it can be used) because it has changed with every breath anyone takes," she said.

Roberts said she means the terms of such payouts often change, although the amounts usu-

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— Susan Roberts, Wallowa County commissioner

ally remain the same as initially announced.

While she hasn't received formal notification from Washington, D.C. on the payout, she's hoping to receive some word from the feds so the commissioners can have something on it to discuss at their next meeting Wednesday, April 7.

"It's to use in any way we see fit," she said.

However, Roberts said she's

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Enterprise approves police chief

Kevin McQuead to be sworn in April 12

By BILL BRADSHAW
Wallowa County Chieftain

ENTERPRISE — Enterprise will soon have a new chief of police, now that Kevin McQuead has completed and passed all required evaluations and testing, according to a statement Monday, March 29, released by a city official.



McQuead

"We have extended the official offer of employment as chief of the Enterprise Police Department, which (McQuead) has accepted with a start date of on or before April 19," Jenni Word, Enterprise City Council president and Police Committee chairwoman, said in an email.

Word said McQuead will be sworn in at the council's next meeting, Monday, April 12.

McQuead replaces Joel Fish, who was elected Wallowa County sheriff last year and was sworn in to the position in January. McQuead has served as a deputy with the Wallowa County Sheriff's Office since February 2008, when he resigned as an Enterprise police officer to take the position, according to Chieftain files.

He is the husband of city administrator Lacey McQuead, but the "City Council does not feel any nepotism or conflict of interest has occurred with this hiring process or will occur as the city of Enterprise policies are followed," a February press release stated.

The chief reports directly to the City Council.

