

# Joseph youths raise donations for humane society

By RONALD BOND  
Wallowa County Chieftain

JOSEPH — Nine-year-old Rylee McKee and her friend Peyton Fough, 10, both students at Joseph Charter School, love animals, and are often wanting to help animals.

“She’s always been looking for ways to raise money for animals,” said Peyton’s mother Tiana Fough.

“The two of them found each other and that is all they want to do is go play with animals,” said Rylee’s mom, Vanessa McKee. “They are wanting to rescue something.”

Before the COVID-19 pandemic started, the two girls had plans in place for a small dog-walking business.

In February, the two went to the Wallowa County Humane Society, looking to join on as junior volunteers.

The girls were turned down only because of their age — junior volunteers cannot start until age 12.

“We just felt that 12 is more an age where you can start doing things without a parent, they’re more mature



Bill Bradshaw/Wallowa County Chieftain

From left, Mary Gasset, cat coordinator and board member for the Wallowa County Humane Society, receives donated pet-related items and \$16 from Rylee McKee, 9, and Peyton Fough, 10, on Friday, April 2, 2021. The girls collected the goods from fellow students at Joseph Charter School, then brought the donations to the Humane Society in Enterprise.

at that age,” Humane Society board member Mary Gasset said. “We feel at that age they can start handling things, doing events, helping with the animals, they are more mature at that age.

“Maybe we’ve been proven wrong with these girls.”

The preteens were at first disappointed, but they didn’t allow that to stop them from finding a different way to help the Humane Society.

“Miss Peyton here decided to write a letter to the principal begging for a space here to take donations to the society,” Vanessa McKee said.

get a lot more donations, and we knew our principal would allow a fundraiser,” Peyton Fough said.

Principal Sherri Kilgore approved the plan for the donation box. The duo enlisted two friends to help make posters and decorate the station and box.

“They made posters, put posters up all around the school. It was amazing — all by themselves,” Gasset said. “Their mom contacted us and said, ‘Look what they are doing.’ It was really overwhelming that these girls did this.”

Over the course of a few weeks, donations came to the set up at the school.

When it was all said and done, the girls on Friday, April 2, took their haul to the Humane Society. The contents included dog and cat food, treats, toys, a cat bowl and \$16 in cash donations. All told, Gasset estimated there were more than \$200 in goods.

“It really shows that these kids are raised right, to take it upon himself to do that shows what big hearts these kids have,” Gasset said. “We

are 100% run on donations and volunteers. Our Humane Society really runs on about 15 people. I was so impressed by these girls. That little bit will go a long ways for us.”

Rylee said she was happy for those who donated to the cause.

“We were excited that a lot of people care about animals and they were able to help with that project,” she said.

Both moms beamed with pride about their daughters, too.

“It was all their idea, their own self-motivation,” Vanessa McKee said. “It was a definitely proud parent moment.”

Tiana Fough added she is used to her daughter behaving in this fashion, and wasn’t surprised.

“She’s always been like this. It does make me proud, but she does have a giving heart. I could see her someday starting her own nonprofit. We have a pretty strong faith, and we have raised our children to have giving hearts, so I think part of that is what God’s put on her heart to do, and (with) her personality, it’s natural for her.”

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## Hope Farm Fire



Ellen Morris Bishop/For the Wallowa County Chieftain

Enterprise volunteer firefighter Tyson Samples aims his hose at a still-warm fuel-tank while other firefighters cool down and mop up the debris at a fire at Hope Farm on Liberty Road in rural Joseph on Wednesday, April 7, 2021. The fuel tank was a special concern, Samples said, and firefighters wanted to ensure that it was cool and safe. The fire spread from a pile of hay and grass that was being burned as part of spring cleanup to a century-old wooden granary. The flames were controlled before they could spread to the house and barn, Enterprise Assistant Fire Chief Dan Niezen said.

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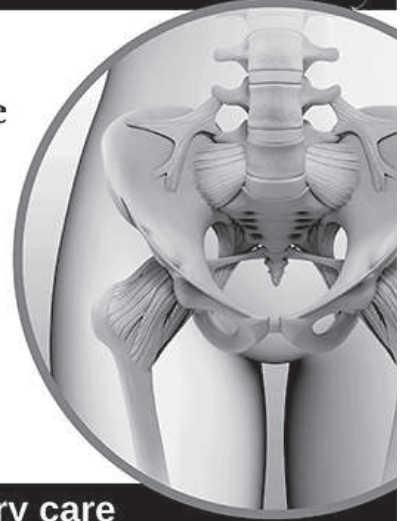


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