

Summer lunch program a huge hit with children

Building Healthy Families has given out more than 1,650 lunches this summer

By RONALD BOND
Wallowa County Chieftain

ENTERPRISE — The summer lunch program through Building Healthy Families is booming.

In the first four weeks, which is the midway point of the eight-week program, there have been 1,658 lunches distributed to youths at three locations throughout the county, an average of about 415 each week, according to Susie Polumsky, lunch program coordinator for BHF.

“Just as families rely on school lunches during the school year, summer lunches help families stretch their food budgets while providing nutritious healthy meals for their children,” Polumsky said in an email to the Chieftain.

The program, which BHF has been running since 2016, started this year on June 14, and runs through Aug. 5.

“The summer lunch program has so many positive impacts. Not only does it put healthy meals into the hands of kids, it also provides an opportunity for positive connection, getting kids outside and building commu-



Ronald Bond/Wallowa County Chieftain
Andrea Mildrexler with Building Healthy Families, right, passes lunches to Trinity, left, and Tessaray Schoeszler on Wednesday, July 7, 2021, at Enterprise City Park.

nity,” said BHF Executive Director Maria Weer. “It is definitely one of my favorite programs that Building Healthy Families offers.”

Due to the lingering COVID-19 pandemic, the lunches are being distributed in a grab-and-go fashion. Polumsky said each meal has to meet a required list of items: meat, grain, fruit, vegetables and milk.

A menu of what is com-

ing each week is published, and Polumsky said BHF has been able to largely stick to the planned slate.

“This year the fruit has been a little tricky,” she said, noting some supply-chain issues with fruit have led to changes in that portion of the menu.

Polumsky said the number of kids who pick up lunches at Enterprise City Park varies daily. On

Wednesday, July 7, 30 youths had lunch in Enterprise through the program, and more than 100 were given out across the county. She said the highest number in one day at Enterprise this summer has been 56.

“It’s a slower day here today, but some are like that,” she said. “But we’re getting kids food.”

In all, 600 lunches have been distributed in Joseph,

544 in Enterprise and 514 in Wallowa.

Paul Schoeszler of Enterprise was with his daughters, Tessaray and Trinity, as the girls picked up their lunches Wednesday afternoon.

He said the girls usually get lunch there a couple times each week, and added it’s a much healthier option.

“The benefit of it is (it’s) organized, healthy food versus on-the-fly food” you

would get from a deli, he said. “They love it.”

Another benefit, he said, is “it’s easy on anybody’s pocket book.”

Schools across the county also utilized the program to serve lunch to students who were in their summer enrichment programs.

“The school programs have increased the usage of the summer lunch program this year,” she said.

Polumsky said many families — and children — are glad to have the option during the summer.

“I started doing this like three years ago. It’s like ‘What do you want to eat? What’s your favorite food? This one little boy says, ‘Whatever you feed me is my favorite thing,’” she said. “The families are really grateful to have this service is the message we get back.”

Weer noted that while the USDA provides reimbursement for the program, food costs are the primary source of that refunding. Donations make up the difference.

“Staffing, transportation and activities require extra funding. Summer Lunch in the Park would not be possible without the amazing support of our community,” she said. “Each year civic groups, partner agencies and individuals provide monetary donations that allow us to feed kids across Wallowa County.”

Minam and Wallowa rivers see flows below average

By RONALD BOND
Wallowa County Chieftain

MINAM — Streamflow in Wallowa County’s rivers is running well below normal for this time of year.

It’s not, however, at historically low levels.

Data from the US Geological Survey taken at two locations in Wallowa County — on the east fork of the Wallowa River close to Joseph and on the Minam River near Minam — shows the rivers are flowing anywhere from about two-thirds of their normal rate to as low as 30-35% of average.

The conditions on the Wallowa, while concerning, are not terribly bleak. Data taken at 11:45 a.m. Friday, July 9, showed the river’s flow at 28.6 cubic feet per second. The average on that day, taken from 47 years worth of data from the USGS, shows the flow is typically at about 44 cfs, putting the 2021 numbers at about 65% of average. A year ago at this time, it was



Alex Wittwer/The Observer

The Wallowa River is shown near the confluence with the Minam River at Minam on Saturday, July 3, 2021. Both rivers have flow rates below normal, with the Minam River currently running at about 30% of its typical rate.

flowing at around 55-60 cfs.

On Monday afternoon, July 12, the flow was 27.1 cfs, about 75% of average.

It is, however, still well above the lowest flow for the river on that day, which was just 6.5 cfs in 1977.

The flows historically

decrease over the course of the summer, so the numbers reaching under 30 cfs is not a surprise. However, it typically doesn’t reach that point until around July 18-19. By the end of July, streamflow historically is under 20 cfs, though last year it was at

about 25 cfs on July 31.

The picture is a lot worse on the Minam River.

Flow rates at noon Friday, July 9, were at just 232 cfs, not quite 30% of the daily average, which based on data from the last 56 years is 799 cfs. And while not

quite to the record low flow of the day, it’s much closer to the low mark of 145 cfs recorded in 1977.

It’s also what the river’s level typically is at toward the end of July. At midday a year ago on July 9, the Minam was at about 900 cfs.

By Monday, July 12, the flow had dropped below 200 cfs to 190, still above the low for the day of 130 in 1977. It’s at about 34% of the average rate for July 12.

The river historically sees a major drop in flow during the month of July. On average, it runs at about 1,100 cfs at the beginning of July, and decreases to an average of 232 by July 31, putting its current level about three weeks ahead of schedule.

On average, the river’s flow typically peaks in early

June between about 1,850-1,890 cfs, and earlier this year was actually running above that mark. Around June 5, recorded streamflow briefly reached above 3,000 cfs. Even just four weeks ago, the river was running above average, touching close to 2,000 in mid-June.

It has been on a steady decline since.

The water temperature in both rivers is higher, as well. In the Minam at the USGS datasite, the temperature has been ranging between about 58-74 degrees in early July, well above the 47-58 degree range it was at this time a year ago.

In the Wallowa, the range in the first nine days of July this year has been between 48-59 degrees. A year ago, it ran between 41-53 degrees.

Bond project update shared at school board meeting

By RONALD BOND
Wallowa County Chieftain

WALLOWA — School officials shared an update in the bond process and two new board members took their oath during a meeting of the Wallowa School District Monday, July 12.

Tammy Jones, the district’s superintendent, shared an update of where the school is with the bond that voters approved in May to pay for \$11 million in upgrades — \$7 million of which comes from the bond and \$4 million grant from the Oregon Department of Education.

“We are working (on) finding a consultant,” Jones told the Chieftain. “We are doing the preliminary official statement second draft, which is what happens when you go into bond work. ... The preliminary official statement is a document that tells about our financial history. You make sure you are telling the story of who you are as a district, as a school” so bond purchasers know what they are buying.

The board voted for an intent to award management of the bond project to McBurney Management

Services, LLC.

“He has a really amazing track record of keeping projects of this size and bigger under budget and even finishing things up ahead of schedule,” Jones said.

The superintendent also said that in coming weeks, the district will put out a request for proposals to hire an architect for the bond project, will have core samples drilled to test

the stability of concrete for the gymnasium seismic project, and will have demo work done on the ceiling of the gymnasium to inspect the structural integrity of trusses and arches. A temporary ceiling will then be put in place.

The board on Monday also saw newly elected school board members Zachary Lathrop and Mark Moeller take their board

member oath, and selected Woody Wolfe as the board chair and Marty Stevens as the vice chair.

The COVID operational plan for 2021-22 was also discussed based on the latest guidance from the ODE.

The board voted that masks will not be mandated, but still will be optional for those students and staff who wish to wear them.



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GABE MCKAY

As we close in on Chief Joseph Days later this month, we look back to Mountain High Broncs and Bulls in June and the performance turned in by Gabe McKay. The defending champion in ranch saddle bronc riding repeated as the 2021 champion in the event with scores of 74 and 81 to claim the title.

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