

Wecks:

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aspects and elements of that pageant,” she said. “They are judged on personality, they are judged on appearance, they are judged on public speaking abilities, their ability to answer impromptu questions, they go through an interview, (and) they take a written test.

“Everything kind of aligns with mainstream pageantry.”

The exception to that is the horse skills contestants were to display, and knowledge of the lifestyle beyond just taking part in a rodeo. Carr said they had to ride a pattern given by the judges, ride a pattern they create their own, and show their understanding of industries such as the agriculture and beef industries.

“You can’t represent something you don’t know, so they really have to be able to talk to the public knowledgeably,” Carr said. “You have to be well-rounded.”

Wecks said the ample experience she has in winning previous Miss Rodeo



Wallowa County Chieftain, File
Destiny Wecks and her horse Opie. Wecks won the title of 2022 Miss Teen Rodeo Oregon at the Junior Miss and Miss Teen Rodeo Oregon Pageant on June 26, 2021, at the Tillamook County Rodeo.

honors and being a CJD queen were helpful, but added she still was preparing late the night before the

pageant, preparing for her speech and written test.

“I was up until midnight or 1 a.m. studying,” she said.

Wecks is active in FFA, Natural Helpers, and the 4H horse program. She trains horses as well as riding her own horses for drill, 4-H, rodeo and pleasure. She represents Oregon in 2020-21 as High School Rodeo First Attendant and the Chief Joseph Days Honorary Queen.

Wecks has been on a horse just about her entire life, and has royalty in her blood with her mother, Vixen Radford-Wecks, being a former CJD queen. She credited her mother with helping her get started in many of the events she now is part of.

“She helped me a lot,” Wecks said. “It’s not just to like horses, but you can have jobs and other opportunities in horses. When I started doing horse or FFA I realized I could do rodeo as well.”

While the date is not finalized, Wecks’ coronation will be sometime in early 2022.

“I hope I can travel all over Oregon as well as surrounding states, like Idaho and Montana, to welcome more people to our state and tell them about rodeo,” she said.

Mentors:

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students participate each year. Some are repeats, participating in their junior and senior years. The nine-month program begins in September, when teens are challenged with the task of coming up with the idea for a business and proceeding with starting their business.

“The long-term goal (of the program) is for our teens to come back with skills needed in our community,” said Green.

Out-migration, where young people leave the community they grew up in for opportunities in education or work, and do not return to their communities of origin, is a huge issue all across the country, she said. Companies here are desperate for certain skills if they are to thrive and survive, she said.

Green speaks passionately about the student entrepreneurs she has mentored over the years — teen entrepreneurs such as Leith, who just graduated from Joseph Charter School and was given the award Most Likely to Be An Entrepreneur for the second year in a row. She was the first to launch her business, called EZ 123 Kitchen. Leith had a marketing plan and financial records showing how she earned revenue totaling more than \$1,300. Or incoming Enterprise senior Alona Yost, who started an animal care business called Alona’s Perfect Pet Sitting taking care of dogs, cats and other animals. When the business took off, she began including child care and was in high demand from busy parents who needed quality childcare.

Lessons learned

Starting and running one’s own business is not easy, and it comes with unseen and unexpected pitfalls. Leith, for example, had to learn how to manage the sometimes-conflicting pressures of schoolwork, outside work, social obligations, extracurricular activities and family responsibilities. She learned the importance of managing one’s times through lessons on goal-setting and prioritizing and was able to manage her time in order to run her business



Stacy Green/Contributed Photo
Joseph Charter School student Bayden Menton won the award for Top Producer in the Mentor Match Teen Entrepreneur Program as his business, Old School Cutting Boards, earned more than \$6,000 in revenue.

and still find time for other things.

Katrina Haines, an Enterprise graduate who started KH Custom Designs, an art business making custom stickers, learned the importance of marketing.

“I learned getting the word out about your business is key,” she said.

Another lesson the teens had to learn was how to fail. Aubrina Melville started Laundry Lambs as a junior at Enterprise High School. The endeavor, making all-natural wool dryer balls, was time-consuming and not as profitable as she had hoped. By her senior year she had started 292 Lamb Co., selling high-quality ewes and saw a tenfold increase in her profits.

“It’s OK to fail. Failure is often the best way to learn how to move forward,” she said.

The program features speakers and trips tour-

ing businesses started by entrepreneurs.

“Mentoring comes from a variety of those who went to college and entered the workforce to young, crazy entrepreneurs who were millionaires by their 25th birthdays because they took enormous risks,” Green said.

She mentioned a VIP trip the group took to Microsoft where they saw innovations few have seen.

“We have seen things only 300 people in the world have seen,” she said.

The group also took a trip to New York City and met with Tyler Hays, owner of M. Crow in Lostine and entrepreneur furniture craftsman.

Green estimated that approximately 25% of the participants in the program have returned to Wallowa County, bringing their skills with them, and 10% have continued in pursuit of entrepreneurship roles.

Success stories

Green said the program features businesspeople who speak to the teens, many of whom “are desperate for anyone with an accounting background,” she said.

Another project Green mentioned, one started during the first year of the program, was Blue Mountain Boys Recycling. It was a curbside pickup service for household recycling. Five boys started the business, and when three graduated after the first year, the two returning juniors, Marcus Lynn and Erich Roepke, ran the business their senior year. Roepke continued the business in college, renaming it Intrepid Recycling and focused on scrap metal from farms and ranches. Today, Erich makes his living as a social media adventure entrepreneur, traveling around the world documenting environmental concerns through social media. Lynn started his career at the local Bank of Eastern Oregon branch, and is currently the new accounts manager. In his free time, he coaches several youth sports teams.

Matt Perren, who created the idea for Blue Mountain Boys Recycling, returned to the county after receiving his accounting degree from Eastern Oregon University. He is currently the controller at Wallowa Memorial Hospital and received his MBA in June.

Funding for the initial three years of the Mentor Match Teen Entrepreneur Program came from the Oregon Community Foundation. The program is now funded and housed through Building Healthy Families.

Asked if there was one thing she would like people to know about the program, Green reflected for a moment and then said, “We underestimate our teens and how capable they are, and we also underestimate how many teens want to come back and make this their home. By showing them different options, many have found a pathway back here and we are benefitting not just from their professional skills, but from their involvement in the community.”

For more information on the Mentor Match Teen Entrepreneur Program, including when the next program starts, contact Green at 541-398-2314.



Ronald Bond/Wallowa County Chieftain
Ron Meyer serves lunch on Monday, July 12, 2021, as the senior lunch program put on by Community Connection of Northeast Oregon returns to the Enterprise and Wallowa senior centers. Next to Meyer, Belinda Kuntz begins preparing another plate.

Lunches:

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program, which would serve anywhere from 30 to 60 or 70 people at each center pre-COVID-19, Guentert said, brings back an important component of life for many in the age demographic — socialization.

“Data has proven that engaged seniors, socialized seniors, tend to live longer, live healthier, active lives than seniors that do not engage and socialize,” she said. “The importance in our county, where our population of those over the age of 60 is over 30%, it’s very, very important.”

Socializing was indeed a key component missing from the lives of seniors who were at the center Monday.

“Missed it like crazy,” said Bev Connolly of Enterprise,” but it was what it was.”

“(There was) no place to go,” said Murna Downing of Enterprise. “It’s nice to be out again among people instead of eating alone. We’re not eating alone at home.”

Ruby Zollman, of Joseph, said it was “lonesome” being home as long as many were during the pandemic.

“You lost contact with people,” she said. “I just stayed at home all the time, shut in.”

Of being able to be back, Zollman added, “It means a lot.”

While meals are served at the senior center, they are open to individuals of any age.

“Very open, very inclusive,” she said. “Non-seniors can come eat at the center, they just have to pay the fully allocated price of \$5.75 a meal.”

Seniors can give a donation of any price to eat, but

it is not required.

Lunch at the center is not dependent on an individual’s income, either, Guentert said.

“And I think that sometimes is a misconception that it’s a low-income program,” she said. “It’s not. It’s about keeping seniors healthy, active and engaged.”

Activities are also returning to the center.

“We partner with Home Health as far as toenail foot clinics, pilates, zumba, all those activities can now be resumed,” Guentert said.

The centers will serve lunches on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, beginning at 11:30 in Enterprise and at noon in Wallowa.

Masks will not be required, but they will be available for anybody wanting one. There also will be extra sanitization measures used by staff, and added availability of sanitizer.

“We want to protect them,” Guentert said of the seniors.

She added the center is looking for volunteers, and anybody interested can call 541-426-3840.

As for what Guentert anticipates as lunches return?

“I’m torn. And the reason I’m torn is people have been so excited and been asking for more than a year ‘When are you reopening?’” she said. “Part of that lends me to believe we are going to be inundated. The other part of me says people are still worried about COVID exposure. I’m not sure which way it’s going to swing, but I sure hope it’s big participation.”

On the first day back, there were around 20-25 individuals who joined for lunch.

“There isn’t very many here today,” Downing said. “It’ll take a while (for them) to come back.”

Quiet Enterprise City Council meeting held

Chieftain staff

ENTERPRISE — Little action was taken during a low-key Enterprise City Council meeting Monday, July 12.

The council did vote on — and unanimously passed — a handful of actions, including a resolution to close an existing City of Enterprise Fire Account through Bank of Eastern Oregon. The remaining balance of \$3,218.66 will be transferred to the general fund.

The council approved an event permit for Ron Pickens for a grand opening for the upgraded Enterprise Skate Park, but did not allow for a street closure. The council also approved an event permit requested by Candy Bunn

for the annual Main Street Show and Shine.

And the council voted to begin the process of vacating both Tejaka Lane and Highland Drive on the south end of Enterprise.

Discussions regarding use of a city vehicle at the Enterprise Airport continued, but will be brought before the council again in August. It’s recommended that a city vehicle be removed from the airport agreement and that the use of the vehicle be addressed in the future.

The next city council meeting is Aug. 9. There is a public input meeting on vacation rentals tonight, Wednesday, July 14, at 6 p.m. and a dedication ceremony for the city council room currently scheduled for July 30 at 3 p.m.



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