



# WALLOWA COUNTY CHIEFTAIN



137th Year, No. 21

WINNER OF THE 2020 ONPA GENERAL EXCELLENCE AWARD

Wednesday, September 1, 2021

## Wallowa County Voices



**Theadora Bloomfield**  
Enterprise

### She came to avoid Portland 'chaos'

ENTERPRISE — Theadora Bloomfield has lived in Wallowa County for 5½ years — most of that time in Enterprise — having moved here from Portland. She said she moved here to both get out of Portland and to be near her parents. "I wanted to get out of Portland and reevaluate my life," she said. "You know, mid-20s and you have to figure out which direction you're going before it all goes downhill."

So she found this direction. "(Portland) is not quiet at all; it's chaos," she said. "I feel safe here. I feel safe having a child here." Bloomfield said she met the "love of my life" here and her 3½-year-old daughter, Luna, was born here. James Andrews is the "love of her life" in the county. Bloomfield operates a bakery out of her home called Simply Sweet. She recently shared her thoughts about living in Wallowa County.

#### What's your favorite thing about Wallowa County?

I like the community of it. Everyone knows everyone and when something happens, there are multiple people out trying to right a wrong. That's a beautiful thing. Also, the views and everything you can do here when it's not packed full of tourists.

#### Are you going to get vaccinated?

No. It all just boils down to what is the most informed decision I can make that I feel the most comfortable with.

#### How has the pandemic affected you?

Really, it hasn't. I always take the necessary precautions since I opened my home (business). I'm super safe when I'm preparing things. I have all no contact (with customers) unless they want to do it otherwise. I wash my hands (regularly).

#### What do you think of the governor's order on teachers being vaccinated?

When it comes to any forcible vaccination, I think that's completely wrong. Everyone has a choice to make their own decisions. With every choice comes certain responsibilities and no one's choice should ever be taken away.

#### Did you do anything particularly fun this summer?

Camping, the lake, the paddleboats, the tram.

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

Don't do it. Move if you're a quiet, wind-down type of person. Don't move here if you're not. It's so slow here and the winters are so harsh.

## Wallowa County's surge continues

By RONALD BOND  
Wallowa County Chieftain

Wallowa County has surpassed 400 COVID-19 cases, and has now seen its case count double in just over a month.

The Oregon Health Authority reported Monday, Aug. 30, that there were 32 new COVID-19

### INSIDE

For a timeline of climbing cases in Wallowa County, see **Page A6**.

cases over the weekend, which sent the overall total during the pandemic up to 405. They were among

5,545 cases the OHA reported over the weekend, and was the highest one-day report to date in the county, though its unclear if the county's one-day record was topped.

The report comes near the end of a month that has seen COVID take off in Wallowa County and across the state, with OHA

attributing the vast majority of cases to the delta variant. In August alone there have been 166 cases. That number is higher than the amount of cases from the start of the pandemic in March 2020 through April 28, 2021, when a report of three cases lifted the total in the county to 165.

The total in Wallowa

County has more than doubled since the 200th case was reported on July 19, as it took just 41 days to move from 200 to 400 cases after taking 16 months to reach 200 from the start of the pandemic. The infection rate in the county is up to 5.65%.

See Surge, Page A6

## Back to the books amid pandemic

Schools reopen with new focus on safety

By BILL BRADSHAW  
Wallowa County Chieftain

WALLOWA COUNTY — Schools are doing their best to reopen with a sense of normalcy in Wallowa County, despite the resurgent coronavirus pandemic and strict mandates on masks and vaccinations.

**Enrollments up**  
Joseph Charter School was the first to hold classes for the fall semester opening Wednesday, Aug. 25. Superintendent Lance Homan said the school welcomed 280 students in its K-12 school. He said that number was up from normal and though he isn't certain why, he has his theories.

"We've heard a lot of new families are moving in," he said.

As for how school looks this year, it'll be similar to how it's been since the pandemic started in March 2020. Most students attend class at the school, but some families are opting for online learning.

"It's kind of a mix," Homan said. "There's in-person, of course, but we have an online option."

He said about 15 students have chosen the



Superintendent Lance Homan chats with students at Joseph Charter School as they exit after completing their first day of classes Wednesday, Aug. 25, 2021. By Monday, all schools in Wallowa County were in session.

online options.

The Imnaha School, a K-8 school that's part of the Joseph district, had six students in the first, third, fourth and sixth grades, teacher Shari Warnock said after the first day of school Wednesday. The small school has no remote instruction, although it is possible.

"We were all in-person last year and look forward to being in person again this year," Warnock said.

Tammy Jones, superintendent of the Wallowa School District, said her district also is expecting a

higher enrollment.

"We've registered a lot of new kids" in the past week, she said Wednesday.

Jones said the new students are some who have come with new staff and others are just ones who have moved to Wallowa from other areas.

She said by far, most Wallowa kids are opting for on-campus learning. On Wednesday, only three or four had opted for the virtual classes.

Outgoing Enterprise Superintendent Erika Pinkerton said enrollment is up from last spring.

"We've had a lot of families come back to us from online learning," she said. "We've had new families come into the county. ... We've had folks coming from Portland, Walla Walla, even (from) Bend."

Pinkerton, whose last day as Enterprise superintendent was Monday — the school's first day of classes — said numerous jobs — particularly at Wallowa Memorial Hospital — have brought new families to Enterprise. That, and the increasing willingness for employers to let workers do their

jobs remotely, has boosted school enrollments.

School officials said Monday the elementary school had 201 students attend on the first day and 203 at the junior high/high school for 404 total.

Although many schools were forced to switch to remote learning at the beginning of the pandemic, Enterprise has been holding classes on-site at least since last fall.

"A year ago, the majority of our school was on site. One of few in Oregon

See School, Page A7



Bill Bradshaw/Wallowa County Chieftain

Making the return trip to Joseph from Enterprise down Hurricane Creek Road were some of the 160 entrants Saturday, Aug. 28, 2021, during the Wallowa Mountain Cruise.

## Wallowa Mountain Cruise draws classics

By BILL BRADSHAW  
Wallowa County Chieftain

JOSEPH — The 160 entries in this year's Wallowa Mountain Cruise was up from last year — held in the midst of the coronavirus pandemic — but down from the event's usual 200 entries, according to Jude Graham, a co-chairwoman of the Aug. 27-28 event.

Still, the event was deemed a success as it was able to be held despite the surging coronavirus pandemic.

"We didn't do any indoor events; the whole thing was outdoors," Graham said. "People were staying a distance

from each other. I feel they did a good job. The nice thing about Joseph is we have really wide streets and really wide sidewalks."

Still, among those who attended were many wearing masks.

Graham said the crowds seemed particularly thrilled having two bands playing live music.

"The people had a great time with that," she said. "It was amazing."

The grand finale of the cruise was concluded Saturday afternoon when most of the entrants took part in the "Ragman Memorial Cruise,"

in honor of Jim "Ragman" Tuschhoff, a co-founder of the Oregon Mountain Cruise, the predecessor to the current event. That was followed by the awards presentation and a dinner.

Graham also was appreciative of the volunteers and sponsors, particularly the youths from the Rooted Youth Ministry who helped clean up after the event.

Graham said next year's cruise is already scheduled for Aug. 26-27, 2022.

Among this year's awards was a new one for Garaged in

See Cruise, Page A7

## Surge tests hospital capacity

By RONALD BOND  
Wallowa County Chieftain

ENTERPRISE — Statewide, hospitals have been near or even at their capacity, with more than 1,100 people in Oregon hospitalized due to coronavirus and the state exceeding 90% capacity.

Wallowa Memorial Hospital has been in a similar situation.

Brooke Pace, WMH communications director, said during the past month, the hospital has reached its patient capacity several times.

She clarified, though, that that doesn't necessarily mean all 25 beds at WMH are full. The staffing availability also has to be taken into account.

"We have reached capacity a number of times since the beginning of August," she said. "That doesn't mean we've had 25 patients. It means we've gotten to the point that we're taking care of as many patients as we physically can."

Stacey Karvoski, the hospital's quality director, said the acuity of the patients — how much care they need — also is a consideration.

"Hypothetically, we could have seven patients in the hospital and that is all we can take care of if the acuity is high," she said.

See Hospital, Page A6

