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WALLOWA COUNTY CHIEFTAIN



137th Year, No. 22

WINNER OF THE 2020 ONPA GENERAL EXCELLENCE AWARD

Wednesday, September 8, 2021

Wallowa County Voices



Jonathan Bork
Redmond, Wash.

Part-time resident has deep roots here

ENTERPRISE — Jonathan Bork doesn't live in Wallowa County, but he has long experience and deep roots here.

His mother, Diane Swedk, owns a ranch of about 300 acres off of Peak Lane north of Enterprise where Jonathan's brother now lives with their mother. Their grandparents once worked and farmed there.

"I've been up here ever since I was 6 years old," the retired construction inspector from Redmond, Washington, said.

Bork said he is helping his brother winterize the ranch where their mother now lives and, at about 90, needs some looking after.

"The house is sitting there idle and waiting for some kind of life to happen," he said, adding that it's not up for sale. "It's got a \$10 million view of the mountains up there."

He recently shared his thoughts about his time in Wallowa County.

What's your favorite thing about Wallowa County?

We're looking at it right now — the sun's shining... I've never been up here when the sun wasn't shining, even in the wintertime. And I like that when you drive down the road, people wave at you... That's something you don't get in the metro area. And they don't give the single-finger salute. Of course, there's a lot of silence at night and you can actually see the Milky Way. Haven't seen that since the last time I looked for it up here.

What are your thoughts as the 20th anniversary of 9/11 is here?

The current administration is a disappointment. We look pretty poorly in the world's eyes right now. As far as 9/11 goes, I feel sadness and I don't feel America's resolved a lot of the issues that were created from that... We paid a pretty high price. We've learned, as a nation, that no place is safe from terrorism and our government's doing the best job they can.

Are you concerned about the recent coronavirus spike?

Yes, I'm vaccinated and I intend to get any boosters that they offer. I don't know if it's protecting me, but so far, so good. (The medical community) they've done a fantastic job. My daughter's a nurse and I was afraid for her.

What do you think of the renewed mandates on face masks?

It doesn't hurt, but it doesn't work unless people start using it. Social distancing is a good deterrent. It's hard to tell; I don't think they know enough about masks.

Anger in Wallowa County: Protesters reject mandate



Bill Bradshaw/Wallowa County Chieftain

Todd Rogers, of Help Our Kids Succeed, lower left, reads a statement to protesters against state mandates requiring coronavirus vaccinations Wednesday, Sept. 1, 2021, outside the Wallowa County Courthouse. Rogers and Hilary Miller of the Stop the Mandates Coalition addressed the county commissioners later.

More than 150 residents gather in heated protest at courthouse

By BILL BRADSHAW
Wallowa County Chieftain

ENTERPRISE — Wallowa County is angry.

At least, the more than 150 protesters were who gathered on the courthouse lawn Wednesday, Sept. 1, to register their objections to Gov. Kate Brown's mandate requiring all public employees get vaccinated against coronavirus.

Two of their number attended the meeting of the Wallowa County Board of Commissioners that morning to address the situation. But the commissioners weren't sure they could do anything more than they've already done.

"I'm here to speak on behalf of friends, family, businesses, teachers, the state and others,"



Bill Bradshaw/Wallowa County Chieftain

"Quit being sheep!" shouts Joseph businessman Gary Bethscheider from a crowd of more than 150 people gathered Wednesday, Sept. 1, 2021, outside the Wallowa County Courthouse. The grassroots gathering was there to protest state mandates requiring coronavirus vaccines and sought help from the county commissioners.

said Todd Rogers, of Help Our Kids Succeed. "I'd like to give my time over to Hilary Miller, who has a nice presentation for you guys."

"Everybody has the right to choose the vaccine if they

want it and everybody has the right to not choose it if they don't want it," Miller said prior to the meeting. "We are not an anti-vaccination group. We are a pro-medical choice and bodily autonomy group."

As she told the commissioners, "I'm a wife, mother, registered nurse, veteran and co-creator of — and Wallowa group leader of — the Northeastern Oregon Stop the Mandate Coalition. I am speaking on behalf of this coalition.

"We are a grassroots group erected from the recent COVID-19 vaccination mandate from Gov. (Kate) Brown, which threatens our livelihoods and liberties. With almost 500 members just by word of mouth, we are comprised of health care workers, law enforcement officers, state workers, teachers and others affected by this mandate. In addition, we are joined outside by members of the HOKS group — Help Our Kids Succeed — this Northeast Oregon coalition is a tri-county coalition, but just within Wallowa County, between our numbers and the HOKS group makes up almost 300 Wallowa County citizens."

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Workers in short supply amid year of great job growth

By SUZANNE ROIG
The Bulletin

Editor's note: Today starts Part One of a five-part series by EO Media Group to publish over the next five weeks, looking at the issue of the lack of workers for jobs in Central and Eastern Oregon; why workers are not returning to previous-held jobs and how businesses are pivoting to function without being fully staffed.

BEND — With record job growth in Oregon, Whitney Keatman never imagined she would have problems finding workers for her Scott Street location of Sparrow Bakery.

And she didn't. It was getting them to stay that has plagued her long-time Bend business.

In the past year Keatman, a co-owner, made 117 job offers and most were accepted. But after just three months, only about 42 workers remained. The



Dean Guernsey/The Bulletin

Co-owners of Sparrow Bakery in Bend, Whitney, left, and Jessica Keatman with their sons, Brooks and Abel are at the Scott Street bakery location, which is closing due to a worker shortage.

bakery needed a minimum of 20 workers at the Scott Street location and by the end of this summer there were six.

So, she made a hard decision: She will close the bakery at the Old Iron Works Arts District.

"We've been struggling for seven years with moments of success," Keatman said. "Over the years we've had on again and off again good managers. When you don't have the right management, you have a hard time retaining workers."

"It's common for people to come and begin training and then get another job offer that competes with wages," she said. "There's no allegiance. It's a competitive market for employers."

Finding workers a challenge

During a year of record job growth in Oregon, employers like Keatman have had the hardest time finding workers to fill positions. Companies across the state, particularly in the leisure and hospitality industries, are scrambling to find workers.

The hospitality, hotel, restaurant and tourism-related industries added 6% more jobs this year, economists say. Hiring is more competitive than ever as employers raise wages, offer signing bonuses, referral bonuses, improved benefits, even subsidies also having to compete against federal unemployment benefits, an increase in household income from federal stimulus funds and retirements.

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