

# Integrated care center has virtual opening

Actual opening will be Oct. 4

By **BILL BRADSHAW**  
Wallowa County Chieftain



Bill Bradshaw/Wallowa County Chieftain  
**Gay Behnke, left, and Bob Crawford cut the ribbon Thursday, Sept. 9, 2021, to ceremonially open the new Hearts for Health Integrated Care Facility in Enterprise. A virtual ceremony was held Friday and the facility is slated to officially open Oct. 4. Behnke and Crawford are co-chairmen of the fundraising board for the Wallowa Valley Center for Wellness that funded the \$9.1 million project.**

ENTERPRISE — The Hearts for Health Integrated Care Center held its ceremonial ribbon cutting Friday, Sept. 10, with a virtual gathering of about 95 people due to coronavirus pandemic restrictions.

The actual ribbon was cut the day before in a filmed event when fund-raising co-chairmen Gay Behnke and Bob Crawford were on site for the event.

But patients and staff will have to wait another few weeks for the center to actually open its doors for Winding Waters Community Care Center and the Wallowa Valley Center for Wellness to be able to welcome patients.

“Both organizations will begin providing services in the new facility Oct. 4,” said Tosca Rawls, public relations and development director for the Center for Wellness.

Located just across Medical Parkway from Wallowa Memorial Hospital near Wallowa Valley Senior Living, the combined facilities become a “health care campus,” said Amy Busch, development director for the new center.

The “integrated” aspect

of the facility means medical, dental, mental health, therapeutic, educational and other health care-related services all are offered there. There is even a “teaching kitchen” included in the facility.

“No one will ever know why you pull into the parking lot,” said Chantay Jett, during the virtual gathering. “Your visits are confidential.”

Jett is the executive director of the Center for Wellness.

“We just built the building that embodies what we strive to be,” she said.

Nic Powers, CEO of Winding Waters, agreed.

“It will make a difference in thousands of Wallowa County residents,” he said.

In fact, the new center is the culmination — and a new step — in a partnership that has been ongoing for the past 10 years.

### Officials who helped

U.S. Sen. Ron Wyden, D-Ore., also was present Friday. He called the facility “a model for Americans.”

The senator has been instrumental in helping secure funding at the federal level.

“We have literally the all-star lineup of health care providers ... who will continue to serve Wallowa County well,” Wyden said.

State lawmakers who are perhaps closer to the county’s needs also attended.

Sen. Bill Hansell, R-Athens, said he was “not comfortable with (being included in a) very important persons section. I’d change that meaning to a very important project at a very important place with very important people and a very important team led by (hospital chief medical officer) Dr. Elizabeth Powers

and Chantay Jett.”

Hansell also noted the important contribution of state Sen. Elizabeth Steiner Hayward, D-Portland/Beaverton, in showing the need for the new center.

“It makes it possible for the residents of Wallowa County to get the kind of integrated care they need,” Hayward said.

Hansell then read a letter given to him for the event by former state Rep. Greg Barreto, R-Cove, who was unable to attend.

“It has been a privilege of playing a small part” in getting the project done, Barreto’s letter read. “It saddens me to know that Mike Wilson will not be taking part in this opening. ... He will be sorely missed.”

### Wilson remembered

Wilson, who had been a senior associate at Westby Associates, offered his consultation on a feasibility study prior to undertaking the project. He died in July, Rawls said.

“He was instrumental in the support and the funding for this project,” she said.

Numerous other speakers lamented Wilson’s absence and invoked his memory as the facility was opened.

“We’re carrying Mike’s spirit through this event,” said Mike Westby, CEO of Westby Associates who served as emcee for the virtual gathering.

Numerous others who contributed money, arranged for government funding and donations from foundations, in-kind donations and other means of support were thanked as the \$9.1 million facility of nearly 20,000 square feet was opened.

“It’s important, not only for health care but for building community,” Behnke said. “It is everyone’s space.”

Westby agreed. “It’s hard to believe we’re here today to officially close out this campaign,” he said. “It will be a space for all to use.”

# Fishtrap Fireside gears up for ninth season of readings

Three writers to share in October

Chieftain staff

ENTERPRISE — Fishtrap Fireside launches its ninth season of readings and stories from Wallowa County writers on Friday, Oct. 1, featuring 14-year-old Ginger Berry, plus longtime Fishtrap friends Jim Dameron and Zanni Schaffler.

Fishtrap Fireside is a monthly reading series designed to feature diverse voices of local writers. Each month offers a fresh look at what people of the West are thinking about and writing down. Since the program launched in 2013, more than 100 Wallowa County writers have stepped up to the podium or logged on virtually to share their work. Audiences have enjoyed a variety of genres including cowboy poetry, fiction, nonfiction, humor, memoir, sci-fi fantasy, essay, travelogue, food stories and much more.

“We’re offering Fireside virtually again this fall.” Fishtrap’s Program Director Mike Midlo said. “The advantage of that is how many people can take in these readings not only here at home, but anywhere around the country or the world.”

Anyone anywhere can take in Fireside online at Fishtrap.org and Fishtrap’s YouTube Channel.

October’s featured writers are:

• **Ginger Berry**, a 14-year-old homeschooled freshman attending Oak Meadow High School. Along with writing, she enjoys cooking, read-



Berry

ing, dancing and playing with her two dogs. She has attended the past three summer Fishtraps.

• **Jim Dameron**, an essayist and poet, who thinks of himself as a contemplative fellow with a bad memory

and a limited understanding of the world, which means he spends a lot of time staring at blank pages. That he managed to wrangle a few words into sentences in order to read at Fireside is something of an obscure miracle. Still, he’s won a few accolades along the way and had more than a few essays published in well-known literary journals.

• **Zanni Schaffler**, who was born and raised in Portland, but has lived in Enterprise for the past 14 years. She misses Portland dearly, has struggled at times in Wallowa County, but also has a deep love for this place.

Schaffler has published her poems in various publications and is the recipient of an Oregon Literary Arts Fellowship in Poetry. Currently, she is working on a novel, writing “poemish things,” painting pictures, doing some reading, developing organization and cleaning strategies for her perpetually messy house and is participating as an avid spectator in the Golden Age of Television. She works at the Joseph Post Office and lives with her husband, Frank Helderman III, her cats Humphrey and Blondie and her big dog Ferdinand.



Dameron



Schaffler

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**Wallowology! Hike FREE!**

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**Sat, September 25th**  
9am - 3pm • Meet at Wallowology!

Join Wallowology Ecologist David Mildrexler on a tour of a recently burned prescribed fire area in the Wallowa Mountains. This hike will take you to see first hand the effects of prescribed fire on forests, and will allow time for discussion of burning as a forest management tool.

Pre-registration required at [info@wallowology.org](mailto:info@wallowology.org)

Please note that portions of this hike include some side slopes and off-trail exploration.

**Wallowology!**  
Natural History Discovery Center  
508 N. Main • Joseph • [wallowology.org](http://wallowology.org) • [info@wallowology.org](mailto:info@wallowology.org)

**Wallowa County FREE Chess Club**

No meeting until further notice but look forward to seeing you soon!

White to move and win in three moves.

“Play golf for your body. Play chess for your mind.”

**JOSEPHY CENTER FOR THE ARTS AND CULTURE**  
403 Main Street Joseph, Oregon

9/8Solution Rb1+

## Giving thanks



Bill Bradshaw/Wallowa County Chieftain

The Hurricane Creek Grange gave a free barbecue Sunday, Aug. 22, 2021, to thank the community for the past year. Fortunately, it was a warm, sunny day so most people could eat outside and socially distance.

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**MEET TOE JOE!**

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