



GUBERNATORIAL CANDIDATE MEETS WITH COMMISSIONERS

LOCAL, A6

JOSEPH VOLLEYBALL TEAM RUNS WINNING STREAK TO TEN

SPORTS, A9

\$1.50

WALLOWA COUNTY CHIEFTAIN



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Wallowa County Voices



Paul Pelley
Enterprise

Prepare for 'shopping learning curve'

ENTERPRISE — Paul Pelley and wife, Gail, have lived in the county for about a year and a half, moving to Enterprise in April 2020 from San Jose, California.

"We spent seven years in San Jose and I learned that to live in San Jose, you have to be insane," he said. "I realized that I'm not, and I wanted to go somewhere I could live in a town with no traffic lights and no Starbucks."

He retired as a certified financial planner 14 years ago and his wife spent 40 years as a registered nurse when they lived in Florida before moving to San Jose. They have two adult children, a son and a daughter, as well as three grandchildren.

Pelley recently shared his thoughts about living in Wallowa County.

What's your favorite thing about Wallowa County?

The people. They're very friendly and they do what they say they're going to do. I just enjoy being in a small town.

Are you pleased to see snow on the mountaintops again?

Yes. When I saw that, I thought, "Now we're going to have a change in the seasons." After spending time in Alaska, that made me ready for here — we got all our winter at once.

Are you concerned about the recent coronavirus spike?

Yes, I am. Our daughter, who works at a hospital ... told us that over the last couple of months they've had 42 COVID-related deaths, and a good many of them were 20 or 30 years old. So I'm very concerned about it.

What do you think of government mandates on masks and vaccinations?

I think that government has overstepped its boundaries. It should be left up to the people, but people are not making good decisions. ... I'm a numbers person, and when they're dying at younger ages, that, to me, is pretty black and white.

As summer ends, what was your favorite experience?

We had both of our kids up here. Both of them were concerned about us moving to a little town with no traffic lights and being so far away. Both of them, after being here, have approved of our decision and they want to come back.

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

Get prepared for a place that rolls up its sidewalks early. There's a "shopping learning curve" you've got to go through. You have to shop when they're open and just work your life around it.

County sees 12th COVID-19 related death

Wallowa County reports 18 new cases over the weekend, bringing total case count to 558

Chieftain staff

ENTERPRISE — In the last week, the Oregon Health Authority reported the 12th COVID-19 related death in Wallowa County, and saw the total number of cases during the pan-

demic rise past 550.

On Monday, Sept. 27, OHA reported 18 new COVID-19 cases in the county from over the weekend, which brought the total to 558. This month, there have been 139 cases, but the county on place

to fall short of the 180 cases that came through in August.

The 12th death in the county was reported on Friday, Sept. 24, and was a 62-year-old woman who died at home on Sept 20, and tested positive post-

mortem on Sept. 21. The OHA did not report if she had underlying conditions.

The woman is the fifth known COVID-19 related fatality during the most recent surge of COVID-19.

OHA data shows the rate of vaccination in

Wallowa County is up to 64.5% of residents 18 and older, with 3,714 people in the age range being vaccinated. Of the entire population there has been 3,886 people, or 54.3% of the population, to get vaccinated.



Bill Bradshaw/Wallowa County Chieftain

Landon Braden, Enterprise High School's new counselor, offers a face mask to second-grader Skylynn Adams at Enterprise Elementary School on Thursday, Sept. 23, 2021, where he is acting principal.

Coming home

New Enterprise High School counselor is a Joseph High School graduate

By **BILL BRADSHAW**
Wallowa County Chieftain

ENTERPRISE — Enterprise High School's new counselor sees his job as being more than just someone who directs students toward getting the necessary credits to graduate. He helps with their special problems.

"I don't think Enterprise High School has had a counselor — a mental health counselor," said Landon Braden, who has been on the job for just a month. "They've had a very good relationship with the Wallowa Valley Center for Wellness in providing those services, but it's at least been a very long time since they've had a counselor on staff in the school. The biggest part of that position is



Bill Bradshaw/Wallowa County Chieftain

Landon Braden, the new counselor for Enterprise High School, discusses his thoughts on education Thursday, Sept. 23, 2021, in the principal's office of Enterprise Elementary School, where he is acting principal.

you're building the program. The Wallowa Valley Center for Wellness has done a very good job in building the system and having those services, but adding a full-time counselor inside the school adds another component to it. I see it as a multitiered system so that the kids who are having a hard time focusing because of something they're going through, whether that be a relationship or something at home."

Braden said that multitiered system involves first, himself as the counselor on campus. The second tier brings in a counselor from the Center for Wellness. The third tier would bring in a specialized counselor to help work through an intensive

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Where are the workers: A changing demographic

Editor's Note: This is the fourth in a five-part series by EO Media Group looking at the issue of the lack of workers for jobs in Central and Eastern Oregon — why workers are not returning to previously held jobs and how businesses are pivoting to function without being fully staffed.

By **BILL BRADSHAW** and **ALEX WITTWER**
EO Media Group

WALLOWA COUNTY — It's no secret that employers across the state are struggling to find workers. Business owners collectively furrow their brow at the trickle of job applications as more and more businesses open and the share of workers seems to be van-

Worker Shortage



FOURTH IN A 5-PART SERIES

labor market mean that expansion of operations becomes difficult.

"It's pretty much across all industries," said Stacy Beckman, general manager of Wallowa County Grain Growers in Enterprise. "Managers I've talked to are having difficulty trying to get help."

He said the business he runs didn't actually lose any workers to the pandemic, but expanding his

ishing into thin air.

For some, that means closing restaurants entirely — but far more often the effects of a tightening

labor market mean that expansion of operations becomes difficult.

"It's pretty much across all industries," said Stacy Beckman, general manager of Wallowa County Grain Growers in Enterprise. "Managers I've talked to are having difficulty trying to get help."

He said the business he runs didn't actually lose any workers to the pandemic, but expanding his

workforce has been a challenge.

"Trying to add (workers) is tough," he said. "It's even tougher in a smaller community like we are."

Cindy Ellis, who co-owns and operates Heavenly's Restaurant in Enterprise, switched to take-out only when the pandemic first struck, but was able to resume indoor seating as businesses were allowed to reopen. But then reliable employees became scarce.

"We had to cut our indoor seating because someone we hired didn't show," she said.

Ellis said Heavenly's was open for indoor seating when interviewed on Thursday, Sept. 16.

"We got a lot of folks from Elgin," she said, and despite a small workforce, "we were swamped."

Boomers retiring at a faster rate

Eastern Oregon saw only negligible gains in population over the past decade, according to U.S. Census Bureau data. And looming within the numbers is a certainty that has taken the back seat to pandemic woes and commentary: The boomers are retiring.

In Eastern Oregon, the working population is aging out much quicker than in previous years. The Oregon Employment Department reported in May 2021 that the working population in Eastern Oregon had grown significantly older from 2010 to 2020. That increased share means the number of workers age 55 and over makes

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