



WALLOWA COUNTY CHIEFTAIN



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Wallowa County Voices



Brad Elson
Enterprise

He loves the quiet of the county

ENTERPRISE — Brad Elson loves the peace and quiet of Wallowa County.

He's been enjoying that peace and quiet in Enterprise for the past 10 years. Born and raised in San Diego, he moved here both to get away from the big city and to help out his parents. They are both now deceased.

Retired now from work in water treatment, he has a daughter who is going to school in North Carolina to become a makeup artist in the movie industry. She's expecting, so Elson will have his first grandchild soon.

He recently shared his thoughts about living in Wallowa County.

What's your favorite thing about Wallowa County?

The quiet. I remember in San Diego living along one of the main highways, 7-Eleven and everything else, 24 hours of noise, all night, guns, sirens, cars honking — it didn't stop. The first time I heard quiet was on the way here and I thought something was wrong because my ears were ringing so loud because of the quiet.

As we move into fall, what's your favorite season? Why?

I like the summer, even if it is short — but then I'm from California. Although, it's kind of fun when there's too much snow out there in the driveway to get on my three-wheeler and just tear the crap out of the snow so it would melt faster. That's fun.

Are you concerned about the recent coronavirus spike?

Not as much as other crap. I didn't get vaccinated. My dad did, but he died after my mom. He was 94.

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

Why don't we just call them the Stasi? I don't think the government should be telling us that ****. They tell us enough.

With summer now over, what was your favorite experience?

I had to move, so it wasn't a very fun summer, but it was an adventure.

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

Leave what you've got there behind. ... If you bring all that **** here, it won't be like it is now. It's been changing a little bit.

Local schools meet vaccine deadline

Administrators say faculty are vaccinated or exempted

By **BILL BRADSHAW**
Wallowa County Chieftain

ENTERPRISE — Nearly all faculty and staff at schools in Wallowa County have complied with Gov. Kate Brown's mandate that they receive the coronavirus vaccine or obtain medical or religious exemptions to the requirement, school administrators said.

Brown issued the executive order requiring the anti-virus measure Aug. 13. Under it, all teachers, educators, support staff and volunteers in K-12 schools were to be required to be fully vaccinated by Monday, Oct. 18, or six weeks after full Food and Drug Administration approval of a vaccine, whichever was later, according to Oregon.gov.

The order also provides for exceptions to vaccination based on medical conditions or religious convictions.

Tom Crane, the new interim

superintendent at Enterprise schools, said the 55 faculty and staff there all have complied with the mandate.

When interviewed last week, Crane said the district was still waiting on one person to provide documentation of either vaccination or a permissible exception. On Monday, Crane said that person had come into compliance.

"So we're all good to go," he said.

Lance Homan, superintendent of Joseph Charter School, said the K-12 school with about 280 stu-

dents has about 35 faculty and staff. He said Monday that he did not expect anyone to have to resign because of noncompliance with the governor's mandate.

"At this time, we do not," Homan said Monday. "We're going to open up tomorrow as normal."

Tammy Jones, superintendent at the Wallowa School District, said the schools have just over 200 students as of early October, an increase from the prior year. The

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Back to beginnings

Former elementary teacher Tom Crane takes job as interim superintendent

By **BILL BRADSHAW**
Wallowa County Chieftain

ENTERPRISE — Tom Crane is having a hectic but enjoyable time getting settled into his new role as the interim superintendent for the Enterprise School District and interim elementary school principal.

He said Thursday, Oct. 14, that he keeps running into old acquaintances from his years here as a teacher. He came to Enterprise decades ago for his first teaching position, as he taught fourth grade for 12 years followed by a year in sixth grade from 1982-95. He also coached junior high sports during those years.

Old acquaintances

"The opportunity to see all these people again and their kids and their grandkids, it's just been a blur," he said. "I'll talk to people and walk away and think of 29 things about that person. One lady who works over at the ESD (Education Service District) said, 'You know, I was in your class the second year you were here.' She told me who she was and I remembered her. She said, 'But that's not what's important. What's important is my husband was in your first class and I'll bet you don't remember, but he told me he made a paddle for you.' I said, 'I know exactly who you're talking about. I still have the paddle.' It was a work of art. In my 34 years in education, no student ever gave me a paddle, so that has been with me my entire career."

Did he ever use it?

"It's not my thing and I wasn't part of that generation," Crane said. "I was just amazed that that little boy, that fourth-grader, he and his dad went out in the shop and made that paddle and painted it up and brought it to me. My goal now is I'm going to go home — it's out in my shed — and I'm going to bring it back so that he can see it. That's the kind of moments I've been having. It's just been incredible."

But his job has entailed much



Bill Bradshaw/Wallowa County Chieftain

Zane Anderson, left, hands a paddle he made decades ago to his then-fourth-grade teacher Tom Crane when Crane was in his first year as a teacher at Enterprise Elementary School. Crane, who is the new interim superintendent of Enterprise schools, has kept it all these years and wanted to show it to Anderson on Monday, Oct. 18, 2021.



Bill Bradshaw/Wallowa County Chieftain

Tom Crane, left, the Enterprise School District's new interim superintendent, talks over technology issues with information technician Brant Gorham on Thursday, Oct. 14, 2021, at Enterprise High School. Crane started Tuesday, Oct. 12, and also is the new interim principal for the elementary school.

more than reminiscing. Since he started Oct. 12, he's been in nearly constant meetings learning what he needs to know for the job.

"I'm really excited about being here the past two days," he said. "I was here 40 years ago and I left 26 years ago. It's great to be back to Wallowa County. It's great to be back to Enterprise."

Even his interview with the Enterprise School Board was pleasant.

"Even the interview was fun because one of the board members introduced herself with her married name. I said, 'It's nice to meet you,' and she said her first name and her maiden name and I just couldn't believe it. I said, 'Are you kidding me?' and after that, the interview was a lot of fun. A lot

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COVID-19 case count slows in the past week

Weekly total of 21 cases half of the previous week, which saw 49 cases

By **RONALD BOND**
Wallowa County Chieftain

ENTERPRISE — A corner may be turning on COVID-19 cases in Wallowa County.

The Oregon Health Authority reported Monday, Oct. 18, just three new COVID-19 cases in the county, on the heels of two cases reported Friday. The total number of cases is currently at 673. There

have been no new deaths, keeping the number of COVID-related fatalities at 12. The county's overall infection rate since the start of the pandemic, per the OHA, is 9.4%. It's above the state average, which is 8.25%, but ranked 19th among counties. In all, 17 counties have a rate above 10%.

After a highly concerning start to October, the case count in the past week (from Oct. 12-18) was just 21 cases — fewer than half of the 49 cases reported the previous week. For the month of October, there have been 90 cases reported. The daily average for the month, which a

week ago was up to 6.9 per day, is now at 5.3 per day.

The counts for the past week were as follows: five on Oct. 12, four on Oct. 13, seven on Oct. 14, two on Oct. 15 and three on Oct. 18 from the weekend. There has not been a double-digit day of cases since Oct. 8, when 11 cases were reported.

Statewide COVID hospitalizations totaled 561, according to Monday's OHA report, and 140 COVID-19 patients were in an ICU bed.

Region 9 hospitals, which had dropped significantly from their pandemic high of COVID-19 patients, have seen an

uptick, with 27 COVID patients in hospitals as of Monday.

Wallowa County also is inching higher in the vaccination rate. As of Oct. 16, there were 3,795 individuals 18 and older — 65.9% of that part of the population — who had received at least one COVID-19 shot, and 61.3% of the demographic has been fully vaccinated. When looking at the overall population, there have been 3,979 people — 55.6% of the population — with at least one shot, according to OHA data, and 51.4% fully vaccinated.

The latest COVID-19 breakthrough report,

with data current through Oct. 9, shows there have been a total of 86 breakthrough cases in Wallowa County — cases of people who have received full COVID-19 vaccination but still contracted the disease. That number is up by 14 from the prior report.

At the time of the report, there were 30,687 breakthrough cases reported. Last week's percentage — 2,490 out of 9,141, or 27.2% — is the highest percentage of breakthrough cases in Oregon to date. There have been breakthrough 292 deaths, putting the survival rate of breakthrough cases at 99.05%.



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