

Business groups positive about coming tourism season



By Bill Bradshaw

With pandemic waning, county hopes to get back to normal

WALLOWA COUNTY — As the tourism season begins with Memorial Day weekend, Wallowa County is all set to rebound from the hindrances of the COVID-19 pandemic that put a dent in it over the past couple of years.

Representatives of business organizations in the county expressed optimism that the coming season will be profitable and active.

“It’s looking to be a very busy tourist season,” said Jennifer Piper, executive director of the Wallowa County Chamber of Commerce. “This area continues to be popular destination for people to get away.”

Jude Graham, interim president of the Joseph Chamber of Commerce, agreed.

“All the signs are we’re going to have a great summer,” she said.

Mike Lockhart, president of the Wallowa Lake Tourism Association, also was onboard.

“It’s looking very good,” he said.

While some events were canceled because of the pandemic, the tourism industry managed to survive and even thrive.

Piper said during both pandemic years, which also were plagued by the fire seasons that coincided, lodging data showed the volume was considerable.

“They were two of the strongest tourist seasons Wallowa



Chief Joseph Days Rodeo Queens, from left, Brianna Micka, Destiny Wecks and Casidee Harrod reigned in 2020 and 2021. They are seen here during the CJD Grand Parade on Saturday, July 31, 2021.

County has ever had,” she said. “They were two of the strongest years for demand we’ve ever seen in Wallowa County.”

Hotel bookings

One of the signs the season will be strong is that reservations for rooms are filling up.

“From my conversations with the accommodation people, they’re getting good bookings and filling up pretty well,” Lockhart said.

“I think we’re going to get back to our normal tourist season,” Graham said. “The motels say they’re booking up for the car shows and Chief Joseph Days weekends.”

She was referring to Main Street Show & Shine in Enterprise set for Aug. 19-20 and the Joseph-based Wallowa Mountain Cruise scheduled for Aug. 26-27. Chief Joseph Days is always the last full

weekend in July.

Graham said she’s hoping to see a bigger turnout for Chief Joseph Days. The rodeo runs from July 26-30, but there are added events such as the parade July 30 and the cowboy church and breakfast at the Harley Tucker Arena the day after the rodeo ends.

She said the chamber has been attracting vendors from out of the area, but she hopes to see more locals there.

“We’d love to have some more local vendors sign up,” she said. “It would be nice to get some local people signed up for that.”

But those are just a few of the major events of the summer, others also are planned.

Graham mentioned a bike rally planned for June in Joseph. Put on by a private group, she said, it also is expected to draw tourists.

“They’ll be roaming around

town for a couple of days,” she said.

One event hit particularly hard by the pandemic was Hells Canyon Mule Days. For the most part, it was canceled the past two years, but it’s back on this year, Sept. 9-11 at the Wallowa County Fairgrounds in Enterprise.

The weather

Of course, one variable that could either throw a wrench into the works or be a strong benefit is the weather. Two years ago, the county was plagued with smoke from fires across the state. Last year was hot, with a major fire in the northern end of the county.

Graham was all about good weather in her prognostication.

“It’s going to be wonderful and there’ll be sunshine and blue skies soon,” she said. “It’ll be a great summer.”

TOURISM CONTACTS

Wallowa County Chamber of Commerce 309 S. River St., Enterprise, 541-426-4622; director@wallowacounty.org

Joseph Chamber of Commerce 541-432-1015; P.O. Box 1001, Joseph, OR 97846 across Joseph Street from City Hall

Wallowa Lake Tourism Association President Mike Lockhart, 503-781-4321.

Piper, too, was positive in her outlook.

“My take, my perspective is very positive,” she said. “I’m hopeful for good weather conditions, as well.”

Meeting the demand

Businesses always have to step up to meet the demand of the thousands of visitors who swarm the county during tourist season.

“There’s a greater demand in the tourism market,” Piper said. “Meeting that demand, there definitely are some challenges in the hospitality workforce.”

She said filling jobs is hardly unique to Wallowa County.

“Some of the repercussions we’re seeing from COVID are in the workforce sector with seasonal positions,” she said.

Still, everyone was generally positive in their outlook.

“The lake is very much in demand and they’re filling up pretty well,” Lockhart said, adding that both chambers have done a strong job marketing the county. “I’m pretty positive about the way things are going.”

Bill Bradshaw is a reporter for the Wallowa County Chieftain. Have a business tip? Contact him at 541-398-5503 or bbradshaw@wallowa.com.



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CLUES ACROSS

- Help carry the money bags, say
- Joe in “My Cousin Vinny”
- Included on an email
- Top-shelf
- Sustain, as losses
- Seized car, for short
- *They’re marked with Xs
- Openings in suggestion boxes
- Birth control method: Abbr.
- ___ Lauder
- *Labor options
- “Clair de ___” (piano piece)
- Intl. alliance with many European members
- Take small bites of
- Mythical sailor from Baghdad
- Mopey rock genre
- Letters after CD?
- Unit of resistance
- Cute word between “I” and “U”
- “How was I so foolish?!”
- Diving side of the pool
- Shoppe descriptor
- Starts needing a comb less
- Gives permission
- See 63-Across
- ___ Vegas
- “Law & Order” extra
- DrummerRingo
- “___ asked you?”
- Clorox competitor
- Have a bad cold, say
- Prankster’s cry of success
- Yes, in France
- With 48-Across, certain pill
- Discovers, as oil ... or another answer to each starred clue
- Container for ashes
- Commercials
- Hi ___ (message on a stadium sign)
- “Quiet!”
- Disapproving sound

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CLUES DOWN

- Satisfied sounds
- Really heat up?
- Fund, as a fellowship
- “Ideas Worth Spreading” lecture
- A politician’s may be flag-shaped
- Whole
- Full-body treatment at a Korean spa
- Signaled to begin
- Roth ___
- Dream of dating
- Breath mint brand
- Fencing blade
- Prescription portion
- Tidal mouth of a river
- Prescheduled hour
- Bury in a crypt
- Skin conditions that Cortizone-10 targets
- Mexican money
- Name found in “chocolate milk”
- *Some pitches
- *Removes from the record
- Father’s sister, maybe
- Movie rentals
- Bit of food for some pet reptiles
- Unpaired items on laundry day
- Shakespearean king
- Gambit
- Christine of “Evil”
- Shape of a Toblerone box
- Butt heads
- Long story
- Like a deuce score
- Owned by us
- Hero in Zelda games
- Classic Pontiac muscle car
- Bit of a chuckle



Joseph United Methodist Church

3rd & Lake St. • Joseph
10 AM Worship
Online AND In Person
 For More Info
 541-432-3102
 JosephUMC.ORG
 Pastor Cherie Dearth

Grace Lutheran Church

409 West Main - Enterprise
SUNDAY WORSHIP
at 9am
 Pastor John B. King Jr
 phone (message): 541-426-4633
 web: gracelutheranenterprise.com

Enterprise Christian Church

85035 Joseph Hwy • (541) 426-3449
 We have ‘In-person worship’ @ 9:00 am
 (Guidelines observed)
 Sunday School at 10:30
 Parking Lot Radio/Facebook @ 9:00
 David Bruce
 Pastor, Enterprise Christian Church

St. Patrick’s Episcopal Church

100 NE 3rd St, Enterprise
 NE 3rd & Main St
 541-426-3439
 Worship Service
 Sunday 9:30am

Lostine Presbyterian Church

Discussion Group 9:30 AM
 Worship Service 11:00 AM
 Childrens program during service
 Blog: dancingsforth.blogspot.com
541.398.0597
 Hwy 82, Lostine
 Stephen Kliever, Minister

Summit Church

Sundays at 10 am
 at the Cloverleaf Hall in Enterprise
 Pastor: David Pendleton

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