

# Businesses optimistic in post-COVID tourism season



By Bill Bradshaw

## Scarcity of labor a challenge for some

**W**ALLOWA COUNTY — As the tourism season ramps up in the wake of two years of difficulties caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, business owners and others are feeling optimistic — for the most part. “The sentiment does seem to be optimistic,” said Jennifer Piper, executive director of the Wallowa County Chamber of Commerce in Enterprise during an interview Thursday, July 7.

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

“I think everybody’s optimistic,” she said. “The tourists that are coming through are having a great time. They’re excited about traveling again and the businesses are excited about the summer.”

Mike Lockhart, who is both a business owner — the Wallowa Lake Tramway — and a representative of the Wallowa Lake Tourism Association, was cautiously optimistic.

“It’s really hard to say because we’re dealing with so many negative variables,” he said.

He said for the tram, the



Customers enjoy the outdoor seating Thursday, July 7, 2022, at the Outlaw Restaurant in Joseph. The Outlaw is one business that has had a hard time finding enough employees to serve all the customers who show up. Its owner attributes that problem to government assistance that leads people out of the workforce.

Bill Bradshaw/Wallowa County Chieftain

big thing is the weather. If it’s cloudy or smoky, visibility is down and people can’t get a good view from the top of Mount Howard. But he’s optimistic it will improve.

He said tourist accommodations are doing well and visitors are staying longer.

“That may be because of the price of gas, but I really don’t know,” he said. “There’s so many things screwed up but it’s really

hard to tell.”

One of the challenges business owners face is a lack of employees. During the pandemic, state and federal unemployment insurance allowed people to take time off from work.

“A lot of people quit the labor force for the couch,” Lockhart said. “Other people had good reason to quit, such as approaching retirement age. This just accelerated it somewhat.”

He noted that from per-

sonal observation, many local youths don’t seem to be working.

“But I really don’t know what’s causing trouble with the labor force,” he said.

Scott Rushton, co-owner of the Outlaw Restaurant in Joseph, said the lack of employees is hurting his business.

“The business is there but there’s just no employees because of all the government money they’ve been given. Nobody wants

to work,” he said, adding that he’s only open half days as a result and hasn’t opened his ice cream stand. “People are showing up even though the gas prices are high.”

He said he is aware of other businesses experiencing the same problem.

Graham agreed that the government’s answer to the pandemic of infusing communities with more money didn’t really help.

“I think it hurt,” she

said. “There’s a lot of businesses looking for employees and they’re on government assistance. Some of that money was spent out of the county.”

Piper noted that in addition to the labor problems, the weather has been a challenge this year. Although last year saw much heat and smoke from wildfires, the rainy spring and cloudy weather experienced this year have been a challenge.

While the dire fears many business owners expressed when the government shut down businesses at the start of the pandemic in 2020 for the most part didn’t materialize, other challenges such as the labor shortage has.

“The challenges were not so much lack of business or a lack of customers,” Piper said. “The challenges (now are a) lack of staffing ... that businesses are still facing. ... It is still a big challenge.”

Just the same, most interviewed were hopeful the tourist season now underway will be at the very least a “leveling out this summer, as Piper said.

Lockhart said from what he’s heard, restaurants and lodging establishments are doing well.

“I look forward to the summer and I’m very optimistic that it’ll be a great one,” Graham said.

*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

1. “The Sweetest Taboo” singer
5. Tallboy beer can’s capacity
9. Hen home
13. Recuperate
14. Nebraska city on the Missouri
16. Congressional staffer
17. Messes up
18. \_\_\_ hand (advantage)
19. Huffed and puffed
20. One-dimensional
22. Donald Glover voiced him in 2019’s “The Lion King”
24. Expense
25. Return from Osaka, say?
27. Tells off
30. Do a trucker’s job
32. Nevertheless, in texts
33. Have debt
35. Runny cheese
37. Body Snatchers, e.g., briefly
39. Trivial Pursuit response
41. “Such is \_\_\_”
42. Director Sam
44. Ctrl+Z
45. Like lime juice
47. WPM part
48. Some feta sources
49. Spoiled
50. Sorrow
52. Thompson of “Thor: Ragnarok”
54. Let know
56. Chopping weapon: Var.
57. Kunal’s role in “The Big Bang Theory”
60. Surmise
62. Vend
64. Leave, as a lover
67. Meriting VIP treatment
69. Mildew’s smell, for one
70. Solo such as “Musetta’s Waltz”
71. Duck variety
72. Nun’s relative?
73. “I’ve \_\_\_ there ...”
74. Fender ding
75. Bits of caviar

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### CLUES DOWN

1. Drawer alternative
2. Cliffside home
3. Start of a fatalistic saying (In this answer, note letters 8-11)
4. Beyond that
5. Certain java (Letters 4-8)
6. Little devil
7. Preschool refreshers
8. Believer in a higher power
9. Scheming group
10. Vinegar accompaniment
11. “\_\_\_ to the Mets” (Strokes song with a poetic title)
12. Bench that may hold Bibles
15. Unqualified pro (Letters 8-10)
21. Boxer Laila
23. Godsend
26. Type of ray or blocker
28. Yoga pose demonstrated three times in this puzzle?
29. Greta Thunberg, nationality-wise
31. Swamp plant
34. Cupid’s counterpart
35. Be a poor confidant
36. Costa \_\_\_ (Panamanian’s neighbor)
38. Nurse a drink
40. Takes to court
43. Like a joke about jokes
46. Cry of victory
51. Lashes grow on it
53. Get, as a concept
55. Cronus or Atlas, e.g.
58. Word after “tag” or “run”
59. Obnoxious people
61. Train trip
63. Rounded roof
64. Vaccine, informally
65. Hot temper
66. Untruth
68. Base of modern society?



### 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  
  
 www.summitchurchoregon.org  
 Cloverleaf Hall • 668 NW 1st St. • Enterprise, OR 97828

### Wallowa Assembly of God

702 West Hwy 82  
 Wallowa, Oregon  
 541-886-8445  
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**Worship Service • 10:am**  
 Pastor Tim Barton  
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### Christ Covenant Church

Pastor Terry Tollefson  
 Church Office: 541-263-0505  
**Family Prayer - 9:30 AM**  
**Worship - 10:00 AM**  
 723 College Street, Lostine

### Seventh-Day Adventist Church & School

305 Wagner (near the Cemetery)  
 P.O. Box N. Enterprise, OR 97828  
 Church 541-426-3751  
 School 541-426-8339  
 Pastor David Ballard 503-810-9886  
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 10:30 a.m. - Noon

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