

Bicycle playground on schedule for Aug. 27 opening

By **BILL BRADSHAW**
Wallowa County Chieftain

WALLOWA — The grand opening of the new bicycle playground in Wallowa is to be held on schedule Saturday, Aug. 27 at 207 W. Second St., behind the Wallowa Schools, despite the hailstorm that pummeled the town, according to Ron Pickens of Building Healthy Families.

The event, which is to run from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., will feature guest motivational speaker Bobby Jones. Food will be available, as hamburgers and hot dogs are grilled and vouchers are offered for snow cones, Pickens said Aug. 17.

Eight mountain bicycles and 10 skateboards will be raffled throughout the day, he said.

The hailstorm did minimal damage to the tin roof on the picnic shelter at the park,



Bill Bradshaw/Wallowa County Chieftain

Workers from the American Ramp Co. moved pieces of the new bicycle playground at Wallowa into place Monday, Aug. 15, 2022. A grand opening for the playground is planned for Saturday, Aug. 27, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

but nothing significant, Pickens said.

“I’m thankful it didn’t set back the grand opening,” he said. “Any damage was kind of small scale in the picture of what happened here that week.”

“We know that the benefits of physical activity for children, especially in under-

served areas like Wallowa, can contribute to better mental health, individual empowerment and a more inclusive community,” Pickens said.

He was the driving force not only for the Wallowa project, but also last summer’s refurbishment of the skate park in Enterprise.

He said there’s still a bit of

work to be done, as kids will be painting a portable toilet donated by Rahn Disposal and building a fence Aug. 19.

“I just had a kid sanding and staining some timber,” he said.

Pickens said his personal experience shows the high value such a project can mean for kids.

“I experienced this firsthand for myself as a child, when I found a positive outlet in recreational sports like biking and skateboarding,” he said. “That’s one reason I was so passionate about this project. I can’t wait to see all the good things it will bring to the community, and am so thankful for all the support we’ve received to make it possible.”

Students from Wallowa County were engaged in the entire process of building the park, from conducting pre-construction community surveys to grassroots

fundraising and from speaking at City Council meetings to designing and constructing the park itself, Pickens said. A youth art contest was held to select the new logo for the park. The park was built on a lot occupied by an unused tennis court on Wallowa School District lands.

The approximately \$270,000-project was paid for with donations from a wide variety of groups and individuals, including the Roundhouse Foundation, the Ford Family Foundation, the Autzen Foundation and the Oregon Community Foundation-Trail Blazers Foundation Fund.

Fundraisers included a drawing for barbecue, a silent auction, a raffle for

time on the Minam River and selling hats and T-shirts.

“We were so impressed with this project and the leadership that the young people of Wallowa County showed to make it happen,” said Erin Borla, executive director of the Roundhouse Foundation. “Building Healthy Families inspired their students and supported the learning of employable skills while leading this project through all phases: planning, design, fundraising and assisting with the construction. This local project also helps to make recreation opportunities accessible for families in this rural county while thinking creatively about a unique space in their community.”

Bike club makes presentation before commissioners

By **BILL BRADSHAW**
Wallowa County Chieftain

ENTERPRISE — The head of a local bicycle club introduced herself and the club to the Wallowa County Board of Commissioners at its meeting, Wednesday, Aug. 17, but wasn’t asking for land for a pump track as she had with the city of Enterprise.

“The mission of the Wallowa Mountains Bicycle Club is to enhance the Wallowa County bicycling experience of families and individuals through advocacy, education and promoting cycling opportunities on the trail, gravel and road,” club President Angela Mart said. “We have tried really hard the past couple of years to involve ourselves in the community, as well as with the Forest Service and working on trails.”

Mart, who with club Vice President Zeb Burke, has lobbied the Enterprise City Council for space on which to build a pump track and bicycle park within the city.

“We’ve been working with the city of Enterprise and unfortunately, all the land they came up with wouldn’t work,” she said. “I have since then reached out to the board at the fairgrounds and I have also reached out to the city of Joseph and I am meeting with the city administrator there on another matter, so I’ll bring that up with him.”

She said the pump track would be particularly good exercise for kids who live in town.

“It’s a really great activity for kids and families and particularly for kids who don’t live on farms and ranches, it’s a great alternative activity for them,” Mart said.

But for now, the 501(c)(3) organization’s focus is on trail and road rides.

“We’re an all-inclusive

bike club, including mountain bikes, road bikes, gravel bikes, kids bikes,” she said. “We have a board of seven members and five awesome sponsors and are a member of Wallowa County Chamber of Commerce. We have pages on Facebook and Instagram, too.”

She said they have weekly rides.

“These have turned out really well,” she said. “We’ve had anywhere from zero people showing up to eight people showing up and it varies from day to day.”

The exercise element goes with Mart’s vocation. She said she’s lived in the county for six and a half years, coming here to help Wallowa Memorial Hospital start its occupational therapy program. As such, she’s the first full-time occupational therapist in the county.

Mart went on to discuss other projects the two-year-old club is working on.

She said the club is

working on posters for a Sept. 8 Safe Riding in Wallowa County Initiative, a course to teach how cyclists, motorcycles, horses and pedestrians can all share the road safely.

The club also has worked with the Joseph Chamber of Commerce on Bike Rides Northwest that camped at Joseph Charter School. As a result of that work, the club received funding and is applying for a grant to add to those funds to pay for a new bicycle rack at the school.

There’s also a scavenger hunt similar to one held in Enterprise last year, she said.

Mart said the club has taken an active role maintaining trails on Forest Service land, such as the 18 miles they work on at Salt Creek Summit. She said they’re working with the Forest Service to put in additional trails.

In other business, the commissioners:

- Approved an order for an intrafund transfer from the

General Fund to the American Rescue Act after the county received a second transfer from the federal government of \$700,035.

- Approved meeting minutes on the county Road Department Service District and a block grant hearing for the Northeast Oregon Economic Development District, both from Aug. 3.

- Approved the separation from service of Robin Workman, who died Aug. 2.

- Approved a new hire of Theresa Spaur in a full-time position as grants manager and executive assistant for the commissioners.

- Approved an intrafund transfer for emergency services for a one-time bonus.

- Approved an interfund transfer from public transit to Statewide Transportation Improvement Fund and STF to STIF. Roberts said this is being combined into one fund, as required by the state.

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