

Small-business & Ag HAPPENINGS

EO Media Group

Chieftain earns Society of Professional Journalists award

ENTERPRISE — The Wallowa County Chieftain and editor Ellen Morris Bishop won first place in sports photography in the Society of Professional Journalists Northwest Excellence in Journalism competition.

Bishop’s photograph of Joseph Charter School high school basketball, “Carson Littlepage is stripped of the ball,” received the top honor in sports action photography in the small newspaper category, which includes papers with up to 15 reporters.

Judges narrowed 1,300 entries down to 250 winners, recognizing reporters, photographers, designers, editors and more throughout the region, which includes Washington and Oregon, as well as Alaska, Idaho and Montana.

Volunteer members from SPJ of western Washington and Oregon administer the contest.

Farmers, ranchers to receive support for COVID-19 losses

WASHINGTON — U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue in a press release Tuesday announced the details of the Coronavirus Food Assistance Program to provide up to \$16 billion in direct relief payments to America’s farmers and ranchers who are enduring losses due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Also, USDA’s Farmers to Families Food Box program is partnering with regional and local distributors, whose workforces have been significantly impacted by the closure of restaurants, hotels and other food service entities, to purchase \$3 billion in fresh produce, dairy, and meat and deliver boxes to Americans in need.

Producers can apply for assistance beginning Monday, May 25, through the Farm Service Agency. The Coronavirus Food Assistance Program provides financial assistance to producers of agricultural commodities who have suffered a price declines of

5% or greater due to COVID-19 and face additional significant marketing costs as a result of lower demand, surplus production, and disruptions to shipping patterns and the orderly marketing of commodities.

There is a payment limit of \$250,000 per person or entity for all commodities combined. Applicants who are corporations, limited liability companies or limited partnerships may qualify for additional payment limits where members actively provide personal labor or personal management for the farming operation. Producers also will have to certify they meet the Adjusted Gross Income limitation of \$900,000 unless at least 75% or more of their income is derived from farming, ranching or forestry-related activities. Producers must also be in compliance with Highly Erodible Land and Wetland Conservation provisions.

Additional information and application forms are available at farmers.gov/cfap.

Producers of all eligible commodities will apply through their local FSA office, which will accept applications through Aug. 28.

Documentation to support the producer’s application and certification may be requested. FSA has streamlined the signup process to not require an acreage report and a USDA farm number may not be immediately needed.

More information can be found at farmers.gov/coronavirus or at your local Farm Service Agency.

Oregon unemployment hits record 14.2%

By Michael Kohn
EO Media Group

SALEM — One out of 8 jobs in Oregon was idled or lost in the month of April, a dubious record caused by statewide lockdowns to slow the spread of the coronavirus.

Oregon lost 253,400 jobs in April and 13,200 in March, the Oregon Employment Department reported Tuesday. The unemployment rate stands at 14.2%.

“While these numbers make for shocking historical records,

they cannot totally capture the economic trauma so many Oregonians are experiencing at this time,” said Anna Johnson, a senior economic analyst with the department.

The record-high unemployment follows a rate of 3.5% before the pandemic. The new data marks the largest month-to-month unemployment rate increase since the recording of comparable data in 1976.

The total number of unemployed in Oregon reached 300,420 in April. Nationwide,

unemployment has increased from 4.4% in March to 14.7% in April.

The numbers eclipse even those from the Great Recession, when Oregon lost 150,000 jobs over two years.

The leisure and hospitality sector bore the biggest brunt of the pandemic closures with 108,400 jobs lost in April. That figure makes up 54.6% of all jobs lost, said Johnson. No sector in Oregon gained jobs in April. Other hard-hit industries include health care and social

assistance (26,800 jobs lost), retail trade (22,500 jobs lost), and the professional and business services sector (19,200 jobs lost).

Government workers were not immune to the lockdowns, with 13,100 job losses. There were also 12,000 jobs lost in construction and 11,600 jobs lost in manufacturing.

Even though many parts of the state are beginning to reopen it’s not clear yet if May numbers will be much better, said Johnson.

STARTUP HOPES TO CLEAN UP

■ Wallowa man worked for years to create a line of environmentally friendly cleaning products

By Bill Bradshaw and Ellen Morris Bishop
EO Media Group

JOSEPH — Some of the world’s most successful, multi-billion dollar companies — Amazon, Microsoft and even Disney — started in a garage. Wallowa County’s newest startup has followed suit.

Wallowa Valley Cleaning Products intends to produce its environmentally friendly laundry detergent, household sanitizer and other products in Wallowa County. Michael Harvey, the founding partner and driving force of the fledgling company, moved to the county a few years ago. But he was no stranger to the region.

“Fifty-five years ago, our Minnesota Boy Scout troop was studying Chief Joseph and his life. Thirty years ago, I visited the Wallowa Valley for the first time,” he said. “In 2016 I moved to Joseph. I thought maybe I’d retire.”

Harvey spent his career as an environmental attorney for Apple, Intel, and Samsung. Retiring was not exactly what happened.

“I was reading labels of supposedly ‘green’ home cleaning products,” Harvey said. “And I was shocked to see that even the ‘green’ brands contained many ingredients harmful to the environment and/or humans, and some didn’t even clean very well.”

He put his 35 years of corporate experience to work, figuring out how to make more effective, safer and sustainable home cleaning products.

But he didn’t do this alone. Harvey found seven partners for the new venture, each with expertise in a field related to his then-unborn products, including the chemistry of cleaning, production of cleaning compounds and, of course, marketing. They devoted three years to planning the products, exploring how to produce them and providing sustainable packaging. Most of this happened in Harvey’s Joseph home with occasional trips into the garage to try out new ideas.

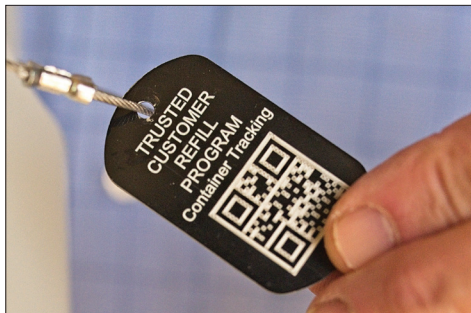
The result is 12 products, including dish soap, laundry products and dishwasher detergent.

But it takes more than careful formulation to produce a green product. There’s



Photos by Ellen Morris Bishop/EO Media Group

Mike Harvey demonstrates how the automatic filler machine he keeps in his garage will someday be used to fill bottles with pre-set amounts of cleaning products.



The coded tag attached to every refillable bottle will let Wallowa Valley Cleaning Products learn more about the life expectancy of its sturdy plastic containers.

packaging, too. Wallowa Valley Cleaning Products wanted to avoid sending plastic to landfills or contributing to ocean pollution.

“We decided to make our containers refillable, so you don’t need to recycle them or toss them, Harvey said. “You can just keep refilling them.”

The fledgling company invested about \$25,000 with a Canadian company to design and produce a sturdy refillable bottle.

Every locally sold refillable plastic container will come with a metal “dog-tag” bearing a computer-readable bar code

cabled to its handle. That tag entitles the customer to refill their cleaned containers. It also will allow the company to determine how many times the container is refilled and how long it lasts.

“That should help keep plastic out of the landfill and also let us track the longevity of our designs,” Harvey said.

So far, the cleaning products have been shipped from Albany to Joseph and packaged in Harvey’s garage, using a big, shiny machine that premeasures the amount for each bottle. Harvey or one of

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Don Swart guided Chieftain into the 21st century

By Ellen Morris Bishop
EO Media Group

ENTERPRISE — In journalism there is nothing more paramount than objectively telling the truth.

Donald Swart, Sr., former Wallowa County Chieftain editor and publisher, epitomized this value, along with a love and support of community, of people and of the landscapes he cherished.

Swart died May 12 in Enterprise of cancer. He was 86.

Swart, a Wallowa County native, went to work for the Chieftain after his father-in-law, legendary editor Gwen Coffin, asked him to take a job for the summer of 1960. Swart devoted the next 40 years of his life to the paper and the community. He captained the Chieftain, first as news editor, and then as editor and publisher, from 1972 to his retirement in 2000 when

he turned over the reins to his son, Rick Swart.

Long-time Chieftain reporter Elane Dickenson said, “Swart steered the Chieftain through many technological changes, from letterpress to offset printing in the 1970s, and later from typewriters and paste-up into the computer age.”

Always open to change, Swart personally built an extra room on to the old Chieftain building for an offset newspaper press, and introduced one of the first commercial computers in Wallowa County. Dickenson recalled Swart said the piece of equipment that was the same as when he started was a well-used pencil sharpener.

Swart was a Korean war veteran who had piloted a U2 spy plane over Russia, China, and North Korea. He brought both self-assuredness and a concern for his

community to his work.

“You have to care about what you are doing, but you can’t care very much about what people are saying about what you wrote,” Swart said.

Swart was at the Chieftain’s helm through the proposed last dams on the Snake River, Watergate, the spotted owl and “timber wars” and Salmon listings — all momentous events in a small county. He stood up for rural communities and economies, ranchers, loggers and farmers.

Swart led the community through his compassion, savoir faire and support of clear and effective communication. His legacy includes the large and robust Rotary youth student exchange program, as well as a newspaper that continues to cover the Wallowa County’s people and happenings.



Contributed photo by Jeanie Story

Don Swart Sr., (right) accepts the Rotary Club’s Service Above Self Award at Rotary district 5100’s recent annual convention with Past District Governor Dennis Wickham. Swart was a former Wallowa County Chieftain editor and publisher who led the paper through major changes from 1972 to 2000. He died last week at the age of 86.