

Wolf Creek Grange celebrates a century

By **DICK MASON**

The (La Grande) Observer
NORTH POWDER —
The story of the Wolf Creek Grange is one of community service, dances, fairs and a fire that ultimately may have benefited it.

The Grange celebrated its 100th year of operation on Sunday, Oct. 24 at 215 E St. in North Powder.

The grange is one of the most vibrant in Northeastern Oregon. Its hall is a gathering place for a number of community events and activities and it has a stable membership of 20-25 men and women.

The Wolf Creek Grange is an anomaly during a time when many granges have declining memberships and are closing.

The continuing strength of the grange reflects the dedication of its members to the grange and the community.

"It is an amazing group," said Grange Master Carol Bouchard.

She said its members bring the community together in a manner that binds it in everlasting fashion.

"They help make this a village, not just a group of houses," Bouchard said.

The Wolf Creek Grange hall is perhaps the most popular meeting place in North Powder. It is the site of exercise classes, weddings



Linda Dickson, left, collects clippings and old photographs to put into a scrapbook collage at the Wolf Creek Grange in North Powder on Wednesday, Oct. 20, 2021.

Alex Wittwer/The (La Grande) Observer

and city council meetings; the weekly distribution of fresh food and other items provided by the Fresh Food Alliance operated by Northeast Oregon Food Bank; and a Lunch Bunch program where lunches are served by the grange each Friday to the community. The rent paid by the groups involved in many of these events helps keep the

Wolf Creek Grange on solid ground financially.

People are likely drawn to the spacious hall's warm and inviting atmosphere because it is so well kept and well decorated. Another plus is that it is centrally located and easy to reach. The site is a far cry from its original location near Wolf Creek, eight miles northwest of North Powder,

where it was destroyed by a fire in the early 1940s, Bouchard said.

The Wolf Creek Grange purchased its present hall in 1957, a building that previously housed a number of businesses, including a meat market and a mercantile store. If the grange had remained in the Wolf Creek Reservoir area instead of

moving into North Powder, it might not be as popular a meeting place as it is today.

"People like to go to places that are convenient to get to," Bouchard said.

The Wolf Creek Grange was the 596th chartered in Oregon but today it is one of only about 200 in the state.

Few of the state's remaining granges likely are

involved in more community services projects than the Wolf Creek Grange. They include a free medical equipment loan service program through which donated items, such as wheelchairs and walkers, are lent free of charge to anyone; college scholarships given annually to local youths; and a community dinner served each year the Sunday before Thanksgiving.

Wynn Nielsen, a member of the Wolf Creek Grange, said the community work done by the grange is a reflection of the many wonderful people who live there.

"North Powder is just a special place," he said.

People who visit the Grange can learn about its history, and the dances and fairs it once put on, by looking at scrapbooks and old photos and reading copies of North Powder's old newspaper, The North Powder News, which was published at least into the 1930s. People reading copies of the 1930s editions of the old newspaper will learn that North Powder then had a gas station, Hutchinson Service Station, an auto repair shop, Newman and Keeney Garage, and a pharmacy, Ferguson's Drug Store, which sold candy for 60 cents a pound.

FDA paves way for Pfizer COVID-19 vaccinations in young kids

By **MATTHEW PERRONE and LAURAN NEERGAARD**

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Food and Drug Administration on Friday, Oct. 29 paved the way for children ages 5 to 11 to get Pfizer's COVID-19 vaccine.

The FDA cleared kid-size doses — just a third of the amount given to teens and adults — for emergency use, and up to 28 million more American children could be eligible for vaccinations as early as next week.

One more regulatory hurdle remains: On Tuesday, Nov. 2, advisers to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention will make more detailed recommendations on which youngsters should get vaccinated, with a final decision by the agency's director expected shortly afterward.

"With this vaccine kids can go back to something that's better than being locked at home on remote schooling, not being able to see their friends," said Dr. Kawsar Talaat of Johns Hopkins University. "The vaccine will protect them and also protect our communities."

A few countries have begun using other COVID-19 vaccines in children under 12, including China, which just began vaccinations for 3-year-olds. But many that use the vaccine made by Pfizer and its partner BioNTech are watching the U.S. decision, and European regulators just began considering the companies' kid-size doses.

With FDA's action, Pfizer plans to begin shipping millions of vials of the pediatric vaccine — in orange caps to avoid mix-ups with the

purple-capped doses for everyone else — to doctors' offices, pharmacies and other vaccination sites. Kids will get two shots, three weeks apart.

While children are at lower risk of severe illness or death from COVID-19 than older people, 5- to 11-year-olds still have been seriously affected — including over 8,300 hospitalizations, about a third requiring intensive care, and nearly 100 deaths since the start of the coronavirus pandemic, according to the FDA.

And with the extra-contagious delta variant circulating, the government has counted more than 2,000 coronavirus-related school closings just since the start of the school year, affecting more than a million children.

Earlier this week, FDA's independent scientific advisers

voted that the pediatric vaccine's promised benefits outweigh any risks. But several panelists said not all youngsters will need to be vaccinated, and that they preferred the shots be targeted to those at higher risk from the virus.

Nearly 70% of 5- to 11-year-olds hospitalized for COVID-19 in the U.S. have other serious medical conditions, including asthma and obesity, according to federal tracking. Additionally, more than two-thirds of youngsters hospitalized are Black or Hispanic, mirroring long-standing disparities in the disease's impact.

The question of how broadly Pfizer's vaccine should be used will be a key consideration for the CDC and its advisers, who set formal recommendations for

pediatricians and other medical professionals.

A Pfizer study of 2,268 schoolchildren found the vaccine was nearly 91% effective at preventing symptomatic COVID-19 infections, based on 16 cases of COVID-19 among kids given dummy shots compared to just three who got vaccinated.

The kid dosage also proved safe, with similar or fewer temporary reactions — such as sore arms, fever or aches — that teens experience.

But the study wasn't large enough to detect any extremely rare side effects, such as the heart inflammation that occasionally occurs after the second full-strength dose, mostly in young men and teen boys. It's unclear if younger children getting a smaller dose also will face that rare risk.

Some parents are expected to vaccinate their children ahead of family holiday gatherings and the winter cold season.

But a recent Kaiser Family Foundation survey suggests most parents won't rush to get the shots. About 25% of parents polled earlier this month said they would get their children vaccinated "right away." But the remaining majority of parents were roughly split between those who said they will wait to see how the vaccine performs and those who said they "definitely" won't have their children vaccinated.

The similarly made Moderna vaccine also is being studied in young children, and both Pfizer and Moderna also are testing shots for babies and preschoolers.

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