

Wallowa Memorial again on top 20 list

Wallowa County Chieftain

ENTERPRISE — For the fifth time in the past six years, Wallowa Memorial Hospital has been ranked among the top 20 critical access hospitals for overall performance in the country and the only hospital to make the esteemed list in all of Oregon, according to a press release.

The top 20 hospitals scored best as determined by the Chartis Center for Rural Health for Overall Performance. The rankings were recently announced by the National Rural Health Association. In September an awards ceremony will be held during NRHA's Critical Access Hospital Conference in Kansas City, Missouri.

The top 20 CAHs have achieved success in overall performance based on a composite rating from eight indices of strength: inpatient market share, outpatient market share, quality, outcomes, patient perspective, cost, charge and finance. This group was selected from the Chartis Center for Rural Health's 2022 top 100 CAH list, which was released earlier this year.

The top 20 CAH best-practice recipients have achieved success in one of two key areas of performance:

- **Quality index:** A rating of hospital performance based on the percentile rank across rural-relevant process of care measures.
- **Patient perspective index:** A rating of hospital performance based on the percentile rank across all 10 HCAHPS domains.

"Wallowa Memorial is proud of the efforts of our hardworking physicians and staff who have contributed to our hospital achieving this designation," said Larry Davy, hospital CEO. "The support of our community is also a significant part of this success. It has allowed us to add several desired services that are often not offered in rural communities. These services include but are not limited to orthopedics, extensive rehabilitation services and outpatient therapy for cancer patients. Our results as an overall top performer means our community can count on us to deliver the services they need now and in the future."

Wallowa Memorial Hospital is a 25-bed Critical Access Hospital and Level IV Trauma Center. The current hospital was built in 2007 and serves the residents and visitors of Wallowa County.



Merrigan's Fresh Cut Flowers is starting with help of Imbler High School's FFA chapter

By **DICK MASON**
The Observer

IMBLER — Stacey Merrigan does not have a greenhouse but she is blessed with a green thumb.

Anybody who has seen the eye-catching bouquets she makes from the flowers she raises would agree.

The Imbler resident's gift for growing plants will undoubtedly serve her well as she launches her new business, Merrigan's Fresh Cut Flowers, on a small parcel of land at her home.

The new business is one of many similar ones blooming on small pieces of land in the United States.

"There is a flower movement," Merrigan said.

The demand for locally grown fresh-cut flowers increased during the COVID-19 pandemic, Merrigan said. She explained that it takes longer to receive flowers ordered from outside Northeastern Oregon because of supply chain issues caused by the pandemic. Imported flowers are in transit longer and as a result will be in bloom for less time after arriving.

"Fresh-cut flowers have a longer vase life than imported ones," she said.

The Imbler resident grows tulips, sunflowers, peonies, zinnias, snapdragons and more flowers at her home but does not plan to have a shop with regular business hours. Instead, when

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Dick Mason/The Observer
Stacey Merrigan examines some of the flowers grown for her new business, Merrigan's Fresh Cut Flowers, on Monday, May 9, 2022, in Imbler.

Eastern Oregon operation a 'family farm'

Cunningham Sheep Co. one of Oregon's largest and oldest family-run farms

By **SIERRA DAWN MCCLAIN**
Capital Press

PENDLETON — Inside the Pendleton Woolen Mills retail store, shoppers oohed and aahed while fingering vibrantly colored clothing and blankets.

"I love people's reactions. That's the most gratifying thing about this work," said John Bishop, president of Pendleton Woolen Mills.

In the adjoining mill — run by generations of the same family since 1909 — skilled artisans worked alongside roaring machinery. Wool was carded, aligned into roving, wound onto spools, stretched and twisted into yarn on spinning frames and sent to looms to be woven into cloth.

Some of this wool came from the Cunningham Sheep Co., one of Oregon's largest and oldest fami-

ly-run farms, with thousands of sheep plus cattle, timber, wheat and hunting grounds.

Those familiar with the farm say its success was built on more than just land and capital; it was also forged through five generations of family members, each contributing to the farm in different ways through a highly orchestrated business structure.

"We are truly a family ranch with almost a 100-year history in the same family, and to me, that's the most important thing, not so much how much sagebrush we've got," said Steve Corey, 75, himself a member of the family farm.

Corey, former longtime chair and secretary-treasurer of the farm's board, acted as spokesperson for the family business and gave the Capital Press a tour of the farm.

Five generations
According to family records, the sheep business was founded by Charles Cunningham in 1873.



Leah Swannack, a Washington State University veterinary student, left, with Glen Krebs, lead shepherd at Cunningham Sheep Co., right, check the health of a newborn lamb.

In 1933, Mac Hoke and his business partner, Don Cameron, acquired it. Cameron later sold to Hoke's family, in whose hands the farm has remained ever since.

Hoke and his wife, Carrie, the first generation, had two daughters: Joan and Helen, the second generation.

Joan married a Corey and Helen married a Levy.

Joan Hoke Corey had three children and Helen Hoke Levy had six — the

third generation.

In the fourth generation, there are six Coreys and 17 Levys.

The fifth generation is composed of around 30 children.

About 75% of the family has stayed in Eastern Oregon, and most family members — including the children — spend some time on the farm.

Everyone has a voice

Industry leaders and community members say

the farm's success is partly attributable to its structure, which strategically incorporates generations of family members.

Direct lineal descendants inherit interest in the company, but non-owners also play a role.

The family has two entities that contribute to the business: a family board and a family council.

The board includes eight family members and one independent director. Board members vote on busi-

ness decisions. The current board has seven fourth-generation family members and one third-generation member. Older generations are transitioning out.

The family council is separate, existing to give everyone a voice. Spouses of lineal descendants are allowed to participate. Although council members don't get to vote on business decisions, the council keeps the family connected and is a "breeding ground for ideas," Steve Corey said.

On some family farms, only those who actually work the ground get an ownership stake and a say in how the farm is run, but that's not the case with Cunningham Sheep Co. This family encourages each generation to pursue their own career interests, on or off the farm, but to be part of the farm either way.

Some family members have chosen farm life, including Dick Levy, who manages cattle, and Bob Levy, who oversees sheep. Others have chosen off-farm occupations, including Steve Corey, who worked in the farm's sheep business when he was young, studied history at Yale University and law at Stanford

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