

Cafeteria workers serve up grab-and-go grub

District serving 1,800 brown bag meals five days a week

By Steven Mitchell
Blue Mountain Eagle

As the hallways of Grant Union Junior-Senior High School and Humbolt Elementary remain eerily quiet, bus drivers, education assistants and cooks have been reporting to work every day to prepare and deliver nearly 2,000 meals five days a week since the statewide closure of schools to slow the spread of the coronavirus pandemic.

On a Thursday morning, the lunch counter was lined with brown bags instead of lunch trays as cafeteria staff filled them with carrot sticks and pulled pork burritos while Grant Union head cook Natalie Weaver labeled the last two “vegetarian” for two kids on the Seneca route and double-checked the sack lunches before staff carted the lunches in plastic totes to their vehicles.

When Gov. Kate Brown closed schools in early March, Grant School District officials scrambled not only to get assignments out to students, but meal plans and delivery routes as well.

By mid-March, the district began offering grab-and-go meals at Humbolt Elementary. In addition, Kim Brown delivers to the Mt. Vernon park and the Seventh Street Complex. Lorrie Stinnett delivers to Seneca, and Tammy Larkin delivers to the former bowling alley parking lot.

Grant Union Principal Ryan Gerry said, before COVID-19, the district only served meals four days a week, but they decided to change to five days a week amid the pandemic.

Gerry praised the hard work of the cafeteria and delivery staff.

“The cafeteria staff have done an absolutely awesome job during this time of closure in getting meals to the kids in our community,” he said.

Weaver said the kids need routine and structure in their lives, and two months ago that was stripped away from them.

“Where nothing is normal right now for these kids — they have no normal schedule,



Contributed photo
From left, Cheyenne Gentis, dishwasher at Humbolt Elementary, Natalie Weaver, head cook at Grant Union Junior-Senior High School, Sharon Flory, bus driver and education assistant, and Shanna Wright, head cook at Humbolt, have prepared and delivered 1,200 lunches and 600 breakfasts for students in the area since the new coronavirus pandemic closed schools across the state.



The Eagle/Steven Mitchell
Jeanette Julsrud, right, picks up a lunch April 29 from Grant Union cafeteria worker Tammy Larkin.



The Eagle/Steven Mitchell
From left, fourth-grader Sam Cole and his sister Hannah, a sixth-grader, pick up their lunches in front of the former bowling alley April 30 from Tammy Larkin. Larkin, an education assistant at Grant Union Junior-Senior High School, said delivering the meals allows her to stay in touch with the students.



The Eagle/Steven Mitchell
A kindergartner gave a thank you note to head cook Shanna Wright when she picked up her grab-and-go lunch April 29. Wright said the students have been grateful for the meals.

no normal routine in their day — this gives them that little bit of a schedule every day,” Weaver said.

Shanna Wright, the head cook at Humbolt who works as a delivery driver as well, said the kids have written thank you cards, brought flowers and brought gifts when she has dropped meals off to them.

While only one person has tested positive for COVID-19 in Grant County, the secondary human cost could be staggering. Survey results from The Brookings Institution, a nonpartisan research group, found that nearly 23% of households said they lacked money to get enough food, compared with about 16% at the height of the Great Reces-

sion. Households with children are in even worse shape. Roughly 35% said they did not have enough food, up from 21% during the last recession.

Hunger in children can inflict long-lasting cognitive damage and inhibit learning and long-term educational attainment, according to research from the Ameri-

can Psychological Association. Malnutrition, according to the study, is also associated with physical illnesses and other chronic conditions, like asthma, iron-deficiency anemia and low bone density.

An education assistant with the school district said the meals students get at school might be the only food they get all day.

Education assistant Tammy Larkin, who delivers to the bowling alley twice a day, said, while she does not see the students she typically worked with directly, she gets to see familiar faces she was used to seeing around campus before COVID-19.

“It is nice to kind of just check in on them and see how they’re doing,” she said.

Community Marketing Grant Program announced for local businesses

Are you open for business, or planning to reopen?

Reach your customers with the help of EO Media Group's **Community Marketing Grant Program**

APPLY NOW

Grant County businesses can apply online today

Blue Mountain Eagle

EO Media Group, an Oregon family-owned multimedia company, has established a Community Marketing Grant Program to assist businesses impacted by COVID-

19 restrictions in the markets served by the company's 12 newspapers, including the Blue Mountain Eagle.

Up to \$1,000,000 in matching advertising dollars will be available. Recipients of the Community Marketing Grant Program will be awarded a dollar-for-dollar match for print or digital advertising in EO Media Group publications. Community organizations

and locally owned and operated businesses are encouraged to apply to extend their marketing to local residents during this challenging time.

Grants are available for a minimum of \$250 and maximum of \$10,000 in matching funds each month, and will be awarded between May 15 and July 31. Applications

will be accepted starting May 15 and must be submitted online at eomediagroup.com/marketing-grant.

Grants will be reviewed and replied to within one to two days of application. For more information, contact your local EO Media Group publishing partner, the Blue Mountain Eagle 541-575-0710 or ads@bmeagle.com.

The Emergency Operations Center (EOC), Grant County Economic Development and Oregon RAIN staff and volunteers have been working hard to contact all the businesses in Grant County during this COVID-19 crisis. We realize that we have not been able to reach every single business due to closures, out of date contact information, or other reasons. Please know that businesses have not been intentionally left out. We care about all our businesses, as they are crucial to Grant County. Our organizations are available for help during this time to provide assistance to help you and your business survive this crisis.

For help or just to receive updated information as it develops on the COVID-19 crisis and available assistance programs, please contact either of the following:

Grant County Economic Development: Email info@grantcountyoregon.net or call 541-575-1555

Oregon RAIN: Email Stephanie LeQuieu at stephanie@oregonrain.org or call 541-965-1598

You can also find updated business resource information and reopening guidance at grantcountycovid.com.

Your Rural Family Health Clinic

Grant County HEALTH Department
528 E. Main, St. E.
John Day

Monday - Thursday
7am - 6pm
Friday 8am - 5pm

Appointments available

Call and schedule your appointment today!
TOLL FREE
888-443-9104
or 541-575-0429

Services Provided:

- Primary Care
- Acute Care
- Women's Health Exams
- Men and Children Exams
- Immunizations
- Family Planning
- Contraception
- Pregnancy Testing & Referrals
- HIV Testing & Referrals
- Cocoon
- WIC
- High Risk Infants
- Maternity Case Management

Grant County Health Department does not discriminate against any person on the basis of race, color, national origin, disability, or age in admission, treatment, or participation in its programs, services and activities, or in employment.

MEADOW BROOK MEAT PROCESSING

Don't get caught in the shortage!
Cheap pork and beef custom cut just like you want it! Call now!

Geoff Witmer (541) 620-4260
41931 Hwy 395 N Long Creek, OR 97856