

Seniors helping seniors

Outgoing high-schoolers give back to their community

By Steven Mitchell
Blue Mountain Eagle

“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it’s the only thing that ever has.”

These words by the late Margaret Mead, an American anthropologist and educator who wrote about social relationships, are fitting for Tanni Wenger’s Senior Team — a group of high school seniors coming together to help the community.

Wenger, a Grant County native who snaps portraits of the county’s graduating seniors each year, said the motivation behind creating the first Senior Team last year was to bring the students together in their final year of high school to make memories and give back to their community.

This year, Wenger said 18 Grant County seniors joined the team, and Parker Manitsas, Quinten Hallgarth, Peyton Neault, Madison Spencer, Quaid Brandon, Abby Lusco and Caitlin Willet were the most active participants who completed each community service project.

Wenger’s Senior Team program kicks off at the start of the school year. She said the team collectively decides on a community project.

COVID-19 brought unforeseen challenges this year. Wenger said the group decided to deliver food, prepare firewood and take care of miscellaneous chores for Grant County’s senior citizens, arguably the most vulnerable demographic this year.

Beyond the opportunity to apply for a small scholarship sponsored by Wenger for following through on their year-long commitment — Hallgarth received \$200, and Willet received \$100 — the seniors said they volunteered because Wenger asked them to step up.

Hallgarth, who broke his leg earlier this year, showed up to the Elks Lodge to deliver food twice and stacked wood once he was out of his cast and in a boot. He said volunteering with a broken leg while in considerable pain was a simple, quick decision.

“I said I would do it,” he said. “I gave my word.” Wenger said the students committed a few hours each week, which they balanced with their classes, sports and other extracurricular activities and responsibilities.

“Doing just a few hours of work has made life easier for so many of these people in our community,” she said. “I think my seniors really got to witness this with some of our projects.”

Hallgarth concurred. He said, for the senior citizens they served, the students were likely the only social interaction they had during the pandemic.

Breaking out, bonding and realizing what matters

In addition to community projects, Wenger said the seniors participate in themed photo shoots. She said the themes included Fourth of July, hunting, boho at the Painted Hills, pumpkin patch, sledding, Valentine’s Day, prom and cap and gown. The “thrift shop” theme, she said, turned out to be the most popular shoot of the year.



Contributed photo/Tanni Wenger Photography
From left, Grant County high school seniors Peyton Neault, Quinten Hallgarth, Quaid Brandon and Jordan Hall work on a community service project.

Brandon and Hallgarth agreed. Hallgarth said Wenger purchased bags of hand-me-down clothes from a thrift store in John Day. He said the group posed for photos in outfits chosen by a teammate who drew their name from a hat.

Madison Spencer said her 1980s-style solid striped polo shirt and khakis made her look like a golfer. Peyton Neault, in a button-up collared shirt, laughingly said he looked like a little kid dressed up for a family reunion in his brand new school clothes.

Along with experiencing the gratification that comes when helping others, the group said they cultivated lasting friendships — in part — by getting out of their comfort zones.

“I’m usually more of a stay-at-home person, so when I did go out I saw their personalities and how they saw the world,” Spencer said.

She said she had never talked to Brandon. But she said now when she sees him she says, “what’s up.”

“All of the groups started to mesh together,” Spencer said.

Hallgarth said at beginning of the year they all had their own social circles, but the more they worked together the more they started hanging out together as the year progressed.

“I bonded with a lot of my classmates a lot more than I ever had before,” Hallgarth said.

Neault said incoming seniors would not regret a service position should they be on the fence about making the commitment.

“It’s the best feeling in the world when you help someone out,” he said. “If they truly appreciate it and have a smile on their face, it is better than anything you could ever do in your life.”

Mead, the anthropologist who also said, “The solution to adult problems tomorrow depends on large measure upon how our children grow up today,” would likely approve.

“I think a lot of us found that with helping older people or whoever,” Spencer said, “that you tend to find out that the smaller things matter the most.”

Prescribed fires planned

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Malheur National Forest crews continue to plan for prescribed fires.

Emigrant Creek Ranger District fire crews were tentatively scheduled to begin ignitions on 200 acres in Silvies 7 Tuesday. Silvies 7 is south of Forest Road 31.

Prairie City Ranger District crews continue to monitor for smoke and hot spots on Elk 16 units C and Qa. Crews are beginning prep work on Unit FB. There is not set date for ignitions on this unit.

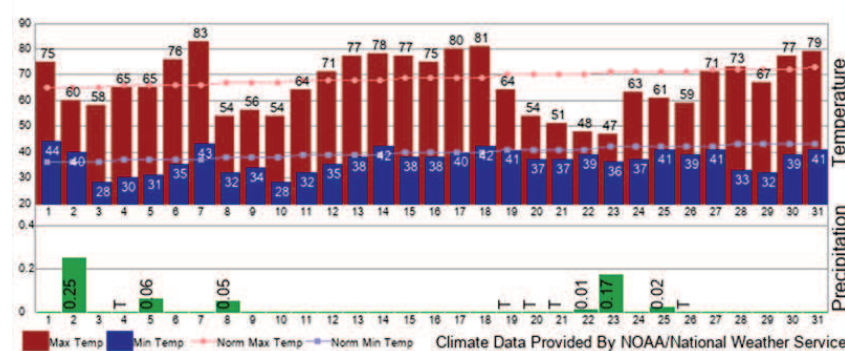
Blue Mountain Ranger District crews will continue to patrol Galena 30 and Murderers Creek 6 this week.

Additional information about prescribed burning is available at <https://inciweb.nwcg.gov/incident/7426>.

For more information, call 541-575-3000.



Contributed photo/Thomas Dekany
Prairie City Ranger District fire officials burned a 100-acre unit near Prairie City in 2019.



Contributed image
May was colder than normal in John Day. Above-normal temperatures and below-normal precipitation are expected in June.

May colder than normal in John Day

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Temperatures in John Day averaged colder than normal during the month of May, according to preliminary data received by NOAA’s National Weather Service in Pendleton.

The average temperature was 51.7 degrees, which was 2.5 degrees below normal. High temperatures averaged 66.5 degrees, which was 2.3 degrees below normal. The highest was 83 degrees on May 7. Low temperatures averaged 36.9 degrees, which was 2.8 degrees below normal. The lowest was 28 degrees on May 3.

There were four days with the low temperature below 32 degrees.

Precipitation totaled 0.56 inches

during May, which was 1.34 inches below normal. Measurable precipitation was received on six days with the heaviest, 0.25 inches, reported on May 2.

Precipitation this year has reached 3.13 inches, which is 3.16 inches below normal. Since October, the water year precipitation at John Day has been 4.50 inches, which is 5.37 inches below normal.

The outlook for June from NOAA’s Climate Prediction Center calls for above-normal temperatures and below-normal precipitation. Normal highs for John Day rise from 73 degrees at the start of June to 83 degrees at the end of June. Normal lows rise from 43 degrees to 48 degrees. The 30-year normal precipitation is 1.43 inches.

COVID-19 vaccine clinic planned

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Community Clinic in John Day.

A COVID-19 vaccine clinic will take place from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Friday, June 18, at Strawberry Wilderness.

The event is for people 18 and older. Call ahead to make an appointment, 541-575-0404.

NA meetings held on Tuesdays

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Narcotics Anonymous holds meetings at 6 p.m. each Tuesday at Redeemer Lutheran Church, 627 SE Hillcrest Road, John Day.

Grant County implements fire season

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The Grant County Fire Defense District implemented fire season June 1. No burn barrel or yard debris burning is allowed during fire season,

according to Chief Ron Smith. Camp fires, cooking fires and warming fires are allowed with landowner approval until regulated use is implemented. There is no date set for regulated use at this time.

Blue Mountain Hospital Auxiliary yard sale planned June 19

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The Blue Mountain Hospital Auxiliary will hold

a yard sale from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday, June 19, at Keerins Hall at the Grant County Fairgrounds.

CORRECTION

In last week’s Artisan section special, the Eagle incorrectly reported the number of board made by Clinton Coalwell from Custom Wood Creations. Coalwell made 200 boards. The Eagle regrets the error.

Albert J. Newman

Jan. 24, 1932 – May 12, 2021



Albert “Big Al” Newman of John Day passed away at his home on May 12, 2021.

He was 89. Al was born in Burns, Oregon, on Jan. 24, 1932, to Thomas and Velma (Pyne) Newman.

He joined older sisters, Effie (Elsie) and Tommie Lou, then came younger brother, Wilford (Bill). He grew up in Seneca, Oregon, then years later the family moved to Mt. Vernon, Oregon. He

left school at the age of 13, and along with brother Bill, they traveled and became road scholars. In 1949, at the age of 17, Al joined the United States Army. He served six years, which included 13 months in the Korean War. He was awarded three Purple Hearts.

On April 28, 1961, Al married Shirlee Cooper. They raised five children, Delbert, Thomas, Andrea, Leo and Albert. Al worked for the Oregon Department of Forestry for 30 years. He was a forest practice officer. He retired in 1994. He was active in the Jaycees, the Elks Lodge, as well as being a reserve deputy for the Grant County Sheriff’s Office.

He enjoyed golfing, fishing and hunting. Al is survived by his wife, Shirlee, of 60 years; his children, Delbert Newman of John Day, Tom (Karrie) Newman of Bend, Andrea (Glenn) Ennis of Prairie City and Leo Newman of Canyon City; 11 grandchildren; and 12 great-grandchildren. He is preceded in death by his father and mother; sisters, Elsie and Tommie Lou; brother, Bill; and son, Albert “Little Al” Newman.

No service will be held. The family will spread his ashes at a later time at his favorite hunting spot. Paid for by the family of Al Newman

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Last Week’s Temps

John Day	HI/LO
Tuesday	89/53
Wednesday	97/58
Thursday	94/64
Friday	85/56
Saturday	76/46
Sunday	63/38
Monday	69/37

24/7 FORECAST

AUTOMATED: 541-575-1122

ROAD CONDITIONS: 511; TRIPCHECK.COM

NOAA WEATHER RADIO FOR JOHN DAY

162.500 MHZ

WEATHER FORECAST FOR THE WEEK OF JUNE 9 - 15

Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday
Chance of thunderstorms	Mostly sunny	Slight chance of showers	Mostly sunny	Sunny	Sunny	Sunny
70	68	73	82	90	91	86
42	48	48	51	54	50	47