

# Fiber Fest draws a crowd to Prairie City

**By BENNETT HALL**  
Blue Mountain Eagle

PRAIRIE CITY — Bare feet pumping the treadle of an old-fashioned spinning wheel, Dianne Wright uses practiced hands to feed hand-dyed sheep's wool into her wooden machine, creating beautiful blue-green yarn.

"This is the way it's been done for centuries," said Wright, one of 29 vendors who participated in the fourth annual Prairie City Fiber Fest. The event began on Friday, July 29, with workshops on weaving, spinning, basket weaving and other skills, then continued through Sunday, July 31, with more workshops and vendors in various locations around town.

Some vendors, like Wright, set up shop indoors at the Teen Center or the Community Center, while others displayed their wares under pop-up canopies in the city park, where musicians entertained the browsers.

Fiber Fest is the brainchild of Prairie City resident Ginger Shive, a spinner and weaver who had been to similar festivals in the Willamette Valley and wanted to bring the same fun experience to Eastern Oregon.

"Our first year, 2019, we started out with five workshops and 18 vendors, and each year it's grown," she said.

"We have people come from all over the Pacific Northwest."

Most of the vendors live in various parts of Oregon, including locals from Prairie City, John Day and Seneca. But there were several who traveled from Idaho for the festival and some who journeyed from as far away as Reno, Nevada, and Northport, Washington, just a few miles from the Canadian border.

Almost everything offered for sale was handmade, with much of the fiber coming from sheep or alpacas the vendors had raised themselves. Goods for sale ranged from raw wool and hand-dyed yarns to scarves, hats, sweaters, baskets, bags, looms, spinning wheels, homemade soaps and hand-carved walking sticks.

Diana Adams of Flying



Bennett Hall/Blue Mountain Eagle  
Diana Adams of Flying Wheel Woolery in Bliss, Idaho, chats with a customer at the Prairie City Fiber Fest on Saturday, July 30, 2022.

Wheel Woolery in Bliss, Idaho, had a wide range of goods for sale under her pop-up awning in the park, including fluffy 4-ounce braids of hand-dyed roving — unprocessed wool for spinning.

"I'm an intuitive dyer," she confided. "It means I don't go by any rules."

This was her first year participating in the Prairie City Fiber Fest, but she seemed to be enjoying herself, chatting happily with a steady stream of customers. While she was glad for the chance to make some sales, she said what she likes most about participating in fiber festivals (she's shown at others in Idaho and Montana) is meeting people and hearing their stories.

"I get a kick out of people's stories," she said.

A few stalls down, Keith and Roma Henney of K&R Crafts in Elkton were displaying their wares, which included wooden picture frames, continuous-weaving looms and walking sticks decorated using a technique Keith Henney calls fractal engraving.

He coats the wood in a resistant solution, then applies a pair of electrodes through which he runs up to 2,000 volts of electricity. Using a rheostat to carefully control the voltage, he scorches the wood with feathery patterns like the fronds of a fern.

The Henneys were recruited by Shive for the first Prairie City Fiber Fest in 2019 and have been back each year since. Like Adams, Keith Henney said he appreciates the income that he gets from showing at festivals, but what he really enjoys is being

around others with similar interests and enthusiasms.

"I'm a people person — I enjoy talking to people and making them happy," he said.

"My wife's very shy, but when she gets around crafts, she opens up."

Shive said she's been to a lot of fiber festivals in other places, and they all have one thing in common — a friendly, welcoming atmosphere that creates a sense of community.

"They're the nicest people," she said. "They share their patterns, they share their knowledge, they look forward to seeing each other. I think it's friendship that brings these people together."

Incorporated as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit in 2020, the Prairie City Fiber Fest has become a fundraiser for local youth groups. Last year, Shive said, the festival donated \$1,800 to the Grant Union High School FFA program and gave nearly \$1,000 to local 4-H clubs.

The event contributes to the local economy in other ways, as well. While Fiber Fest's scattered layout makes it impossible to get an accurate count of participants and visitors, organizers estimate anywhere from 500 to 800 people come to the event each year. Many are from outside the area, and all seem to have money to spend — on everything from gas to food and lodging.

"We definitely bring people to Grant County, said Trish Lindaman, president of the Prairie City Fiber Fest board.

"The Airbnb's have people, the hotel, the RV park. ... We're hoping it brings a little tourism and business to Grant County."

# New owner takes reins at Russell's

**By JUSTIN DAVIS**  
Blue Mountain Eagle

CANYON CITY — Russell's Custom Meats is under new management.

Estacada's Chuck Skupa purchased the business on April 15 for \$125,000, he told the newspaper. The business was put up for sale following the November passing of Tracy Moss, who owned Russell's with his wife, Kathy.

Skupa said he came to Canyon City to look at the business on Black Friday. Following that visit, Skupa said the decision to inquire about purchasing the business happened very quickly.

"The following Monday I figured it would be a good idea to jump on it since there were some other folks looking," he said. A couple of the prospective buyers were corporate interests, and that wasn't something Kathy Moss was looking to get into, according to Skupa.

Word that Russell's was in search of new ownership came to Skupa via a friend in the butcher business out of Diamond.

The business model isn't going to change much under the new leadership. "Pretty much we're going to stay with the same MO," Skupa said.

Most of the work Skupa is doing now involves build-



Justin Davis/Blue Mountain Eagle  
New owner Chuck Skupa stands in front of a display case at Russell's Custom Meats in Canyon City.

ing maintenance.

"It's always been a clean facility," Skupa said, but the building needs upgrades to the plumbing and electrical systems, among other deferred maintenance items. "That's my strength is fixing that stuff."

Skupa said he's already put a significant amount of money into fixing issues with the building but added that the investment is worth it.

"The community needs this facility," he said. "We're pretty much the only (meat processor) around here surrounded by ranches, and I can't imagine being a rancher and having to drive to Ontario, Hermiston, Pendleton or Prineville, especially with fuel prices these days. It's a service that is needed around here."

Russell's Custom Meats has a reputation as a quality meat

## AT A GLANCE

WHAT: Russell's Custom Meats  
WHERE: 235 N. Canyon Blvd., Canyon City  
ETC.: Now under the ownership of Chuck Skupa, the business offers house-smoked meats, jerky, pepperoni and cold cuts, custom game processing and domestic meat cutting.

shop with excellent butchers. It is a reputation Skupa is aware of, and that reputation is the reason he's putting the word out that the business is under new ownership.

"Those that left with good feelings, I hope to maintain that. Those that may have had any bad feelings, for whatever reason, I'm hoping to repair that and let them know that we're here locally for them and offering a clean facility for them to process their critters," Skupa said.

"If you haven't been to Russell's in a while, give us a chance and swing back by on in," he said. "We've got very competitive prices. We make most everything here in house. We have a giant smoker, and we make our own bratwurst and summer sausages just like they used to, (but) now it's better."

# Hot times at the street fair

**By JUSTIN DAVIS**  
Blue Mountain Eagle

PRAIRIE CITY — Sweltering temperatures kept vendor numbers lower than normal but sales were still strong at the Prairie City Street Fair on Friday, July 29, according to vendors and the event organizer.

Around seven vendors ultimately stayed for the duration of the fair, which was hampered both by the heat and by high winds that lifted the shade canopies of a pair of vendors high into the air, destroying them. Despite the lower-than-usual turnout, however, attendees still had a selection of knives, jewelry, baked goods and fishing lures to purchase at the event.

Audry Walker's booth featured handmade jewelry, including earrings and hand-stamped rings. Walker said she tries to set up a booth at as many street fairs as she can and that she'll also be selling her jewelry at the Grant County Fair.

Walker said sales were going well but were not as

strong as normal. "It's slower today, likely due to the heat," Walker said.

Bridget and John Pilgreen sold homemade baked goods at their booth. Bridget said a desire to support the community is what brought her and her husband out to the street fair.

Bridget said the couple plan on setting up booths at future street fairs this year.

"I did a lot last year ... just took a little bit of a break," she said. "So now I'm getting back into it and baking more."

Event organizer Zach Denney of Oregon RAIN said this is the second street fair of the year in Prairie City and that most of the vendors in attendance had been working with him for some time.

"We had a little bit of a challenge with the heat and the wind and stuff today, so this is a little bit of an abbreviated version," he said.

In total, there will be seven street fairs in Grant County this year that will alternate between Canyon City, John Day and

Prairie City. Denney said the fairs have been well-received and Oregon RAIN hopes to expand the program.

"The cool thing is this program has been successful enough that we're looking launch a street fair series per city. We'll have one monthly in each location," Denney said.

"This is the first time that anyone has ever tried a street fair series like this," he said. "I know we have the farmers market in the morning on Saturdays, but we wanted to do something that allowed the public to come out and have fun and give our vendors the opportunity to make money and then hopefully have this type of event roll over into (other businesses in) the cities they're at. ... I know our first one in John Day, I've never seen 1188 as full as it was (then)."

Denney said the success of the street fairs is due to the hard work and dedication of the vendors, who are constantly working to make their booths better at every event.

## WHAT'S HAPPENING



### SATURDAY, AUG. 20

#### Grant County Farmers Market

• 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., South Washington Street, Canyon City  
Locally-grown produce and other items for sale in an open-air setting every Saturday from mid-June through mid-October.

### Family Movie Night

• Dusk, Grant Union Junior/Senior High School, 911 S. Canyon Blvd., John Day

A free series of family-friendly movies screened outdoors on the football field at Grant Union. Tonight's selection: "Clifford the Big Red Dog."

### SUNDAY, AUG. 28

#### Silvies Sunday Slam

• 11:30 a.m., The Retreat and Links at Silvies Valley Ranch, 11 miles south of Seneca on Forest Road 3930

### THURSDAY, AUG. 4

#### Emergency Communication Agency meeting

• 6 p.m., John Day Fire Hall, 316 S. Canyon Blvd.

The Grant County Emergency Communication Agency Intergovernmental Council will meet. Topics for discussion include a new employee sign-on bonus, a dispatch shortage loyalty bonus and an update on the dispatch office expansion. The meeting is open to the public. To participate by phone, call 605-313-5406 and use access code 889135.

### FRIDAY & SATURDAY, AUG. 5 & 6

#### ICA Prime Rodeo

• 6 p.m., Grant County Fairgrounds, 411 NW Bridge St., John Day

Two nights of competitive rodeo action at the Grant County Fairgrounds. Tickets are \$10 for adults, \$3 12 and under or 62 and over. Tickets available online at <https://tinyurl.com/2uzu94jh>.

### SATURDAY, AUG. 6

#### Grant County Farmers Market

• 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., South Washington Street, Canyon City  
Locally-grown produce and other items for sale in an open-air setting every Saturday from mid-June through mid-October.

### Family Movie Night

• Dusk, Grant Union Junior/Senior High School, 911 S. Canyon Blvd., John Day

A free series of family-friendly movies screened outdoors on the football field at Grant Union. Tonight's selection: "Bad Guys."

### SUNDAY, AUG. 7

#### Silvies Sunday Slam

• 11:30 a.m., The Retreat and Links at Silvies Valley Ranch, 11 miles south of Seneca on Forest

Road 3930

Couples date: Any two people play for \$50 each (husband/wife, boyfriend girlfriend, father/daughter, mother/son, etc.). Sunday Slams, open to all Grant and Harney County residents, include golf, cart, range balls and a hotdog lunch. Check-in at the gatehouse starts at 11:30 a.m., with the first tee time at 1 p.m. Call 800-SILVIES to sign up.

### Grant County Junior Rodeo

• 9:30 a.m., Grant County Fairgrounds, 411 NW Bridge St., John Day

Contestants age 16 and younger compete in mutton busting, calf riding, steer riding, dummy roping, breakaway roping, mini broncs, pole bending, barrels, goat tail undecorating, goat tail tying and goat tying.

### SATURDAY, AUG. 13

#### Grant County Farmers Market

• 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., South Washington Street, Canyon City  
Locally-grown produce and other items for sale in an open-air setting every Saturday from mid-June through mid-October.



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### SUNDAY, SEPT. 4

#### Silvies Sunday Slam

• 11:30 a.m., The Retreat and Links at Silvies Valley Ranch, 11 miles south of Seneca on Forest Road 3930

Labor Day weekend: Wear your biggest, brightest belt buckle, and you and your partner play for \$50 apiece. Sunday Slams, open to all Grant and Harney County residents, include golf, cart, range balls and a hotdog lunch. Check-in at the gatehouse starts at 11:30 a.m., with the first tee

time at 1 p.m. Call 800-SILVIES to sign up.

### SUNDAY, SEPT. 25

#### Silvies Sunday Slam

• 11:30 a.m., The Retreat and Links at Silvies Valley Ranch, 11 miles south of Seneca on Forest Road 3930

The last Sunday Slam of the year is a couples date: Any two people play for \$50 each (husband/wife, boyfriend girlfriend, father/daughter, mother/

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Krypto the Super-Dog and Superman are best friends, sharing the same superpowers. When Superman is kidnapped, Krypto must master his own powers for a rescue mission.  
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Mon - Thurs 4:20, 7:20  
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A widowed cleaning lady in 1950s London falls madly in love with a couture Dior dress, and decides that she must have one of her own.  
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