

## Ron Wyden makes Heppner stop School superintendent presents 1995-96 wrap-up



Senator Ron Wyden (left) talks with Heppner Mayor Bob Jepsen

Senator Ron Wyden spent a day in Heppner listening to city and county officials and other citizens.

"I promised in my campaign to visit every county in Oregon during my term," he said at the informal gathering of Morrow County Health District officials and hospital staff. "And I want to bridge the gap between eastern and western Oregon and so I began, symbolically I think, with Wheeler County, the smallest in our state."

Wyden invited everyone present to ask a question and tell of their involvement with rural health. "Educate me," he said. "Tell me how it is working or not working for you out here." He also noted that a US Senator has never set up an office east of Salem. His offices are in Salem, Bend, Medford and La Grande as well as Portland. "Rural Oregon will have more offices than any other part of the state," he added.

Among the issues raised by members of the health district were Medicare and Medicaid reimbursements. The reimbursements make up a large share of the hospital income and with a current bill on the table proposing a \$270 billion cut in actual Medicaid spending many fear the worst. Rural hospitals especially feel it, explained Kevin Erich, Pioneer Memorial Hospital administrator.

Senator Wyden agreed that a major cut in Medicare and Medicaid spending would be detrimental to rural hospitals and said that the bill, though proposed, is not yet passed. He also noted that many believe a cut of \$100 billion would be possible. "I want to save in Medicare in a way that will work for patients, providers, taxpayers, and hospitals," he said.

Also mentioned were issues of rural home health transportation which is currently not reimbursed by Medicare and Medicaid.

Dr. Ed Berretta noted the need for aid to rural physicians to help guard from burn-out and give them needed breaks. He noted the National Health Service Corp., which may soon be able to provide physicians to rural areas for periods of time. "A precedent for this type of service has been set in North Carolina," said Dr. Berretta.

Senator Wyden requested more information from Dr. Berretta and expressed his interest in a program of this sort for Oregon rural physicians.

At the town hall meeting later in the day, the senator met with nearly 20 citizens at St. Patrick's Senior Center. He was asked to consider the resources of Morrow County's geographically diverse area, as well as affordable housing for middle income buyers and education.

Morrow County assessor Greg Sweek was on hand and asked the senator where rural

areas can benefit from the recently passed Telecommunications Deregulation bill. "As far as I can see it hasn't helped us very much," Sweek noted. "Our telephone service has been sold to a smaller company providing less service and many Internet services are long distance. Where do we fit into the nation's telecommunication network?"

Wyden responded that he sits on the communications committee and requested a statement of what services Morrow County presently has. "I want to see what you have now and compare it to the bill to see if there are more benefits there for you," he said.

"I also would like to see the people of Oregon rally together and make this the next Oregon Trail," he said. "We need to come together to make sure that every part of the state has access to long-distance learning, the Internet and all that is available there."

When asked about the pending Clean Streams Initiative, the Senator responded that "...this doesn't look like the way to solve the problem. We need to work together and I am very hopeful before the November election an alternative plan can be developed that will be backed by agriculture, the scientific community and responsible environmentalists."

Senator Wyden cited a similar alliance which took place in Coos County when fishermen were confronted with threatening proposals. "All the agencies got together and made a plan that was acceptable."

"My job is to give you some tools to aid you in building on what you have here in this bountiful area," he said in closing.

Wyden's office is located at 105 Fir Street 210, La Grande, OR 97850, phone 541-962-7691.

### Schools seek special needs students

Schools in Morrow and Umatilla counties are attempting to locate all persons up to age 21 not enrolled in school who may have special needs due to concerns with hearing, vision, speech, language, health, nutrition, learning, developmental delay, transportation, behavior management, mental retardation, birth defects, orthopedic or spinal problems, autism or other disabilities.

Anyone who knows of any child who may need special education services due to any of these conditions is asked to contact Morrow County School District, 270 W. Main, Box 368, Lexington, OR 97839; 989-8202, or call the Umatilla-Morrow School Resource and Referral, 1-800-927-5847.

Morrow County School District (MCSD) superintendent Chuck Starr presented a wrap-up of the 1995-96 school year at a recent MCSD board meeting. "The positives far outweighed the negatives for the MCSD in the 1995-96 school year," said Starr. "It was a successful year."

Starr said the district experienced two major negative happenings during 1995-96-the implementation of staffing cuts to reflect funding resources for the year, and "the increase in litigation by union organizations over legitimate management decisions. The increase in litigation was particularly evident in the issue of contracting transportation," said Starr.

Starr also said that although staffing cuts were made with minimal impact on programs for students, they did result in increased class sizes in Heppner and limited music and art electives in both Heppner and Lone.

On the "positive side", the district accomplished the following:

- Bond projects are underway in Irrigon schools and are ready to start in Boardman;

- A "tremendous" technology program was funded for implementation in 1996-97;

- The Goals 2000 assessment plan is carrying forward the work of "The Creating of the Future Group";

- New curricula and instructional materials were adopted for students in math, science and health;

- The district received the support of, and cooperation with, the Morrow County Unified Recreation District to provide co-curricular activities;

- The district moved to contracted transportation with Mid Columbia Bus Company, saving "thousands of dollars" for other programs;

- Combined efforts have resulted in improved funding position for 1996-97;

- The schools provided "outstanding education to all students";

Starr said that "providing outstanding education to the students is the most important positive item in the list for 1995-96. Our schools did a great job for students."

Starr said that the success of Morrow County Schools is demonstrated by the following:

- Students "continue to feel safe and loved in Morrow County Schools";

- As confirmed by the Oregon Dept. of Education, the schools provide "excellent education

for all students-regular, talented and gifted, special education and bilingual";

- Site councils "are effective in planning school improvement";

- The dropout rate has dropped from 6.8 percent to 6.0 percent and is lower than the state's 7.4 percent rate;

- The "entire staff is committed to excellence and improvement";

- Academic awards assemblies in all schools "recognize the majority of the students";

- Athletic programs had success in all three high schools;

- "Student involvement in Oregon Student Safety on the Move (OSSOM) has resulted in two becoming state officers," Hilary Peck, vice-president, and Lara Fritz, regional representative for 1996-97, both from Boardman;

- Graduating seniors "show that the schools have prepared them well"-107 seniors earned \$177,000 in scholarships, 29 (27 percent) of the 107 seniors scored over 1,000 on the SAT (Scholastic Aptitude Test), and 81 (76 percent) of the 107 seniors plan to enter advanced training beyond high school (86 percent of Heppner's graduates, 100 percent of Lone's and 69 percent of Riverside's).

## Ranchers awarded OFWC funds

Nine Morrow County landowners have been awarded a \$41,975 Access and Habitat Program grant by the Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission to restore and enhance wildlife habitat on their properties along the foothills of the Blue Mountains, southeast of Heppner.

Collectively named the Heppner Regulated Hunt Area, the grant will also maintain public access to these properties that comprise 83,950 acres of big game winter range, as well as habitat for pheasant, chukar, gray partridge, blue and ruffed grouse, wild turkey, mourning dove and pronghorn antelope, according to an Oregon Dept. of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) news release.

An estimated 25 percent of the area's elk and mule deer spend the winter months on these lands. Public access enables the ODFW to manage deer and elk populations at levels that minimize agricultural damage, maintain quality hunting opportunity and sustain rangeland forage conditions, continued the news release.

In order to maintain the current policy of public access to these lands for upland bird and big game hunting, each landowner will be allocated .50 cents of funding for every acre of their property on which they permit public access. Landowners may use these funds to pay for habitat and range improvement projects on their lands, or as direct cash payments.

Habitat improvement projects will include constructing 11 miles of fencing on rangelands to improve the distribution of livestock grazing, noxious weed control to maintain forage for livestock and big game, and developing eight new water sources from existing springs, said the release.

The release also said about 90 acres of coniferous trees will be planted to improve forest and big game habitat, 100 acres will be fertilized to improve forage and another 60 acres will be planted with grasses and forbs for forage.

In return for these grant funds, the involved landowners will maintain all the habitat projects performed on their lands as well as continue to permit the public to hunt. The ODFW and Oregon State Police will patrol the area and enforce hunting and fishing regulations, road closures and other rules.

All projects on these properties are scheduled for completion by June 1997.

The grant was approved, on the recommendation of the Access and Habitat Board, at the Fish and Wildlife Commission meeting held in Portland in May.

## World champion cowboys to compete at OTRP



Fred Whitfield

The Oregon Trail Pro Rodeo, set at the Morrow County Fairgrounds Friday, Aug. 16 at 7 p.m. and Saturday, Aug. 17 at 1:15 p.m., promises lots of exciting rodeo action with big name cowboys as well as local favorites.

Cowboys in the Pro Rodeo Cowboys Association (PRCA) top 15 standings expected to be at the OTRP include:

Team ropers Clay O'Brien Cooper, several times world champion; Mike Beers, local favorite and former world champion; Bobby Hurley, two-time world champion; Charles Pogue; and three-time world champion Allen Bach, ranking number one in current world standings;

Steer wrestlers: Todd Bogger, former world champion; and Ote Berry, four-time world champion;

Calf ropers: Fred Whitfield, current world champion; and Cody Ohl, currently number one in world standings;

Saddle bronc rider Mitch Gregg, local favorite from Hermiston, ranked in the top 15;

Bareback rider Mike Hammer, ranked in the top 15; Barrel racer Fallon Tayler, currently fifth in the standings;

Bull riders Gene Palmer and Kyle Kolbaba, both well-known Oregon cowboys and local favorites ranked in the top 15.

The rodeo will also feature performances by trick riders The Flying Cossacks; Miss Rodeo Oregon Tanya Marie Utberg; rodeo clown Rooster Kersten, and rodeo bullfighters Dangerous Dan Newman and



Ote Berry



Allen Bach



Miss Rodeo Oregon Tanya Marie Utberg

Mark Nichols.

Local cowboys and cowgirls competing in PRCA events include:

Team roping: Bob Mahoney, Mike Mahoney, Brett McDowell and Steve Miller;

Barrel racing: Annie Hisler, Lexi Matteson, Tiffanie Munkers, Kelsie Evans, Kelli Currin, Maryann Munkers, Janice Healy Davis, Randi Rae Britt,

### Market Report

Compliments of the Morrow County Grain Growers

Tuesday, Aug. 13	
Soft White	
Aug.	\$5.06
Sept.	\$5.07/\$5.09
Oct.	\$5.11/\$5.13
Nov.	\$5.15/\$5.17
Dec.	\$5.19/\$5.21
Jan.	\$5.22/\$5.24
Barley	
Aug.	\$132
Sept.-Dec.	\$133

**50th Wedding Anniversary  
Open House Reception for  
Bob & Aloha DeSpain  
Saturday, August 24, 2-5 p.m.  
All Saints Episcopal Church**

**Come Share With Us.**  
at  
**Willow Creek Baptist Church**  
Bible Study for all ages 2 p.m.  
Worship Service 3 p.m.  
Meeting in the  
**7th Day Adventist Church**  
560 North Minor

### UPDATE YOUR LIFE INSURANCE

Bring your policy in and we'll discuss it with you

## PLOYHAR INSURANCE

127 N Main • Heppner, Ore. • 676-5818

### DO YOU NEED HELP PAYING YOUR RENT?

The Umatilla County Housing Authority in Hermiston, Oregon is accepting applications for the Section 8 Program

Section 8 is where you place your name on the waiting list (which isn't long) and if you qualify for assistance when your name comes to the top of the list you are issued a Certificate or Voucher find a place on your own to rent that will pass a Housing Quality Inspection. The Housing Authority will assist you in paying the rent to the Landlord.

If you are interested in finding out more information about how the program works, contact:  
**Umatilla County Housing Authority at**  
1-800-221-6729 inside Oregon  
or 1-541-567-3241 or  
visit us at 155 S.W. Tenth Street Hermiston, OR.