Senior meals coming back to senior center in July



Three of the South Morrow County Seniors Matter board members who have helped bring in-person senior meals back to St. Patrick's Senior Center. L-R: Jerry Conklin, Jackie Alleman and Molly Rhea. Not pictured are board members Sheryll Bates and Dennis Wiser. -Photo by Andrea Di Salvo

of the meal time in which

either provide entertain-

ment or give talk about

health, safety, legal matters

available to help seniors,"

says Conklin, adding that

many of those resources

are online but that a lot of

seniors are not computer

out there in the desert,"

he adds. "We want to be a

connect seniors to helping

hands, whether that means

outside volunteers or con-

necting seniors with needs

with those who have those

gifts—needs and giftings

such as rides, cleaning and

paperwork, to name a few.

niors who have gifts and

abilities to do things, and

there are other seniors who

need help," Conklin says.

"We want to match those

needs—a resource where

seniors can find out about

help that they can get and

of people who think some-

thing should be done about

force, which became the

niors Matter board. Other

this," Conklin says.

It was a big plan for two

We're just a couple

They formed a task

"Finally, we just bit the

They began to pursue

per year for the next two

years from Willow Creek

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help that they can give."

"There's a lot of se-

resource that way."

'They're kind of left

The group also wants to

"There's a lot of things

or caregiving.

literate.

By Andrea Di Salvo

Area seniors will again different entities come and have a time to gather over a meal at St. Patrick's Senior Apartments, thanks to a new organization in South Morrow County. South Morrow County Seniors Matter will be starting in-person meals Tuesday, July 11.

Founding board member Jackie Alleman calls the movement "more than a meal."

"Which is really true," adds another founding member, pastor Jerry Conklin. "Our goal goes beyond just feeding seniors. We want to make it warm and inviting. We want to see seniors helped beyond just

"We hope that senior meals will become a contact for the over 200 seniors in this area," says Alleman.

Starting up the senior meals has been a work in progress since last November. Both Alleman and Conklin work for Morrow County Health District's hospice program, Alleman as volunteer coordinator and Conklin as chaplain.

In the course of their visits, they often either picked up meals for families or went with families to senior meal sites. They couldn't help but notice that Boardman, Irrigon, Arlington and Condon all had South Morrow County Seweekly meals for seniors. They started asking ques- board members are Molly tions and trying to figure Rhea, Sheryll Bates and out how to get senior meals Dennis Wiser. back in Heppner.

Heppner senior meals bullet and said we'd form a used to be provided at St. nonprofit," says Conklin. Patrick's Senior Center through CAPECO (Com-funding. Kim Cutsforth munity Action Program helped them secure \$15,000 of East Central Oregon). Those in-person meals were discontinued for a time during the COVID-19 pandemic and now take the form of take-and-go meals served through Bucknum's Tavern in Heppner on Wednesdays.

"We're glad for that," says Conklin, "There's a lot of people who love the Bucknum's meals."

At the same time, both Conklin and Alleman say their goal encompasses much more.

"Where we're coming from, we're more concerned with caring for the whole person and their needs than just feeding them once a week," Conklin says.

While providing a well-rounded, nutritious meal once a week is important, Conklin and Alleman say they also want to connect seniors to other seniors.

"There are a lot of seniors who don't get out much," says Conklin. The in-person senior meals would be a chance for seniors to get out and socialize with each other.

They also want to connect seniors to community resources they may not be aware of or know how to access. Conklin says a goal is to have a portion

Valley Economic Development Group (WCVEDG). Nicole Mahoney suggested they approach the county and ask for leftover COVID relief funds. The Morrow County Board of Commissioners agreed to that in April and supplied a grant of \$33,984 per year for the next two years.

"At that point, we had promised funding but still had a lot of work to do," says Conklin. "There's been a lot of hoops to jump through, for sure.'

One of the biggest hurdles was finding a cook, which they found in the person of Jodi Segraves. They're still in the process of hiring an assistant cook.

Another problem was the day. They didn't want to hold the meals on Wednesdays, since that is the day Bucknum's distributes its CAPECO senior meals. They have settled on Tuesdays—that's bingo day at the senior center, but bingo will move to 2 p.m. once the senior meals begin.

They say they've had a lot of positive response from the community, both individuals and organizations, but Conklin and Alleman say they are still looking for volunteers to help. They are also open to more funding as they look to the future.

"We're funded for two years, but only two years," Conklin says.

The grand opening of the senior meals will be July 11 from 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Anyone looking for more information or wishing to volunteer can check out the South Morrow County Seniors Matter Facebook page or contact Alleman at 541-667-7865 or Conklin at 541-256-

City removes condemned house



Miller and Sons worked to tear down a house that had been an eyesore on Chase Street for many years. - Photo by Andrea Di Salvo



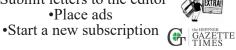
The now bare lot is ready for developement - Photo by Cindi Doherty

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