

McElligott 50 years coaching



The 2023 lone tennis team—McElligott's 44th tennis team during her 50-year coaching career. Back L-R: Assistant Coach Susan Kendrick, Corey Rice, Victoria De la Torre, Martin Medina, Kyle McGill, Liam Heideman, Holly VandenBrink, Calvin Rietmann, Sophia Qualls, Sunem Calvillo and Coach Maureen McElligott. Front L-R: Michael McElligott, Lizzy Doherty, Zamira Dotson, Brionna Serrano, Leelynn Vandever, Jolene Serrano, Kelly Doherty and Gift Cross. -Contributed photo

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tively at Blue Mountain Community College, has coached tennis with McElligott throughout her 19 years in lone.

"She's still really good," says McElligott.

At the same time, McElligott says, the focus is on fun, not competition.

"We let the kids put the pressure on themselves and stress having fun," she says.

"If you lose, you lose. As long as you are progressing and having fun."

"It must be working," she adds. "They keep coming back."

Not counted as part of the fun is the weather, which is unpredictable at best during the February to mid-May tennis season—and downright awful at worst.

"You go a long ways to get miserable sometimes," she says.

McElligott recalls times spent waiting for the bus in the pouring rain, and even one spring when she and Kendrick had to shovel snow off the tennis court after a March storm.

"It was so deep, we couldn't practice," she says.

Things have changed in tennis over the years, especially as Oregon School

Activities Association (OSAA) occasionally redraws the district lines.

"We used to play teams just in this area there were around our own size," she says, adding that the 22 schools in Eastern Oregon used to be divided into four districts. Those districts kept expanding. This year, the tennis district included all of Eastern Oregon.

The expanded districts and the focus on fun haven't hurt the team's record, though. McElligott says most players begin as freshman and develop as players over the years.

"Some of these kids really progress nicely," she adds.

In all her years of coaching tennis, McElligott says she's taken teams to the state competition 34 times, with two individuals placing fifth at the state level.

The year of the first district expansion, the boys' team won first place in the league.

"We've always ended up pretty high, second or third in districts," she says.

She says the lone tennis team, which is usually formed cooperatively with Arlington and Heppner, averages about 15 students

a year. One year, she recalls, Heppner sent several exchange students to be part of the team, which bumped the number to 28.

"That was fun, too," she says.

This year's Cardinal team of 17 included 15 lone students and two homeschoolers. The girls took second as a team in the district competition, along with other individual achievements for both girls and boys.

There have been years along the way when McElligott has considered quitting for good, but it hasn't happened yet. She says she plans to continue coaching through next year, at least.

"It's been fun, for years, or I would have dropped it," she says. "I can't stay on forever, but I can still move."

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Famous podcaster to speak at Republican fundraiser



Bryan Dean Wright will speak at the Republican fundraiser Thursday in Heppner. -Contributed photo

Heppner native Bryan Dean Wright will be returning to his roots this week when he comes home to speak at the Morrow Coun-

ty Republican fundraiser at the Gilliam & Bisbee Event Center Thursday.

Wright was raised in the Heppner area and then went on to serve abroad in the CIA for several years. He says he was originally a Democrat but watched with alarm as he saw his lifelong party embrace what he terms "un-American" and "destructive" forces. He's now a staunch Republican, helping to give life to the America First movement within the party.

Aside from having two successful podcasts of his own—first the President's Daily Brief and now The Wright Report—he has also written about his political

journey for multiple press outlets. He has written extensively about national security issues and the economy, specifically technology and illegal immigration. His work has appeared in outlets ranging from the Fox News website to the LA Times. He has also appeared on TV programs like Tucker Carlson Tonight.

He now makes his home in Arizona.

The Republican dinner and auction is this Thursday, June 22. Doors open at 5 p.m. with dinner at 5:30. Wright will speak at 6 p.m. Tickets are \$25. Contact mocoreps@gmail.com for more information.

Heppner burn ban begins June 26

Heppner Fire Chief Steve Rhea has advised a burn ban will go into effect Monday, June 26, for all burning within the Heppner city limits of. This ban includes all burn barrels. The burn ban is in effect until further notice.

City of Heppner residents can still request that the fire department burn natural vegetation and debris piles, however. A sign-up sheet for fire department assistance is available at Heppner City Hall, or residents can call Rhea at

541-980-4232 or Heppner Assistant Fire Chief Eric Chick at 541-701-4910.

Rhea would also like to remind residents that it is illegal to burn any petroleum-based products such as plastics, rubbers, Styrofoam, etc.

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