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of the City of Heppner and the County of Morrow

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Health assessment offers insights into community well-being

The Community Health Improvement Partnership (CHIP) of Morrow County has released its latest health assessment for Morrow County. CHIP Director Andrea Fletcher says the report serves as a valuable resource for understanding trends and identifying disparities that influence the community's health.

The CHIP is a long-standing collaborative serving Morrow County. It uses the collective expertise from health and multi-sector partners to analyze key data and, along with community input, identify areas of need to support program planning, service development and public policy decisions that directly impact the community.

The report looks in-depth at local, state and national data and information, but offers the following few highlights of three primary areas: special populations, health conditions and system fundamentals.

While overall health trends in the county remain relatively unchanged, disparities persist for low-income and Hispanic/Latino residents. Additionally, maternal, family and older adult populations are of significant concern.

For the general population, leading causes of death and contributing risk factors—such as obesity, tobacco use, blood pressure and cholesterol management, and health screenings—continue to mirror trends from previous assessments, underscoring the ongoing importance of chronic disease management and preventative care.

'Fuel the Race' fundraiser May 30

The community is coming together on Friday, May 30, at the Heppner Elks Lodge to support a local family facing an extraordinary challenge. The "Fuel the Race" fundraiser will feature a taco feed benefit dinner and a lively game of Bingo—all to support Lizzie Ginn, a teenager recently diagnosed with Chronic Granulomatous Disease (CGD).

CGD is a rare genetic condition that affects the immune system, making it difficult for the body to fight off infections. While Lizzie's medical treatments are covered in part by insurance, her family still

Also similar to past findings, behavioral and oral health evidence continues to show the need for improved access to care and health outcomes.

The report also identifies emerging trends such as decreasing seasonal influenza and COVID-19 vaccination rates and increasing cases of sexually transmitted infections/diseases.

Health system priorities include improving communication and coordination, safeguarding access to the local system of care, maintaining adequate workforce, ensuring health equity and addressing social determinants of health (non-medical factors affecting health, such as socioeconomic status, housing and availability of and access to healthy food options).

The CHIP stresses the importance of collaboration between health and community partners to develop strategies that address rural health challenges, reduce barriers to care and optimize resources to improve community wellness. Residents who are interested in improving the health of the community are encouraged to take part in CHIP meetings, held the first Thursday of each month (except July) from 9- 10:30 a.m. Meetings alternate between Heppner and Boardman, with a virtual Zoom meeting option available.

The full health assessment is available to the public online at <https://bit.ly/mephnews>. For more information, email MC-CHIP11@gmail.com.

bears the weight of ongoing travel, food and lodging expenses as they seek specialized care far from home.

The event will kick off with a taco dinner at 5 p.m., followed by Bingo at 6 p.m. Tickets are just \$15 for adults, which includes a plate of tacos and a Bingo card, and \$8 for kids. All proceeds will help alleviate the financial strain on the Ginn family as they support Lizzie through this difficult journey.

Community members can also follow and support Lizzie's journey through the #RacingWithLizzie campaign on Facebook.

Obituaries

Douglas C. Rathbun



Douglas C. Rathbun

On May 3, 2025, Douglas C. Rathbun, an 81-year-old resident of Heppner, OR/Vancouver, WA, passed away at home, in the presence of his cherished wife, Georgia Rathbun. That evening, after a fulfilling day, the clouds parted, reflecting his vibrant spirit that inspired all who knew him.

A celebration of life will take place June 7 at 2 p.m. at Van Mall, 7808 NE 51st Street, Vancouver, WA.

Born on May 26, 1943, in Eugene, OR, to Charles and Gladys Rathbun, Doug was the youngest of three siblings.

He met his future wife, Georgia, during his youth. Doug and Georgia mar-

ried in 1965; they enjoyed 60 years and five months together, spending half a century in Heppner before relocating to Vancouver in 2024 to be nearer family.

After serving in the Navy during the Vietnam War, he pursued a degree in law enforcement. He began his career as a patrol officer in Powers, OR, before dedicating 30 years as Chief of Police in Heppner.

Doug had a passion for fishing, classic cars, western films, and 1950s music, especially Elvis.

Doug was a devoted husband, father and friend, celebrated for his warmth and humor. He had a passion for fishing and relished sharing tales of his adventures. His legacy of love and laughter and competitive spirit for playing cards and Bingo will resonate in the hearts of those he touched, symbolizing the colorful life he led.

He is survived by his wife, Georgia, and their four children: Carllena, Christy (Rob), Charles and Annett (Zeke). He is also survived by five grandchildren, Kyler, Derek, Allena, Izola and Oddin, and one great-granddaughter, Darla.

Heppner MSFocus Walk Breaks Records

Community Unites to Support MS Warriors

By Barb Orwick

The annual Heppner MSFocus Walk made history on April 26, by raising a record-breaking \$7,5000 dedicated to supporting individuals impacted by multiple sclerosis.

Hosted at Hager Park under pleasant skies, the event drew an impressive number of participants, united in their mission to raise awareness and aid those affected by MS.

Photographer Dale Bates set the day in motion with a group photograph before walkers embarked on a scenic tour of downtown Heppner. As the procession moved through the streets, the community's energy and enthusiasm were on full display. A contingent from South Morrow County Seniors Matter proudly debuted its stylized T-shirts, while members of Hopeful Saints Ministry joined in, reinforcing the shared dedication to the cause.

This year's walk even welcomed out-of-town participants, including a group of ladies from Hermiston and a couple from Ione, WA, further demonstrating the widespread support for MS awareness. Their presence added to the event's in-

spiring atmosphere, showing that the fight against MS extends beyond Heppner's borders.

While statistics suggest that only two to three individuals in the valley might be affected by MS, local knowledge paints a different picture—many community members know of at least 10 cases. This discrepancy highlights the significant impact of MS in the region and reinforces the importance of MSFocus's mission. The organization helps MS warriors by offering financial assistance for home remodeling, assistance technology, personal activities and medical solutions to support their daily lives.

At the close of the event, heartfelt words of gratitude filled the air:

"Thank you to all the support and donations for this event to help those MS warriors!"

The record-breaking fundraiser not only provided crucial financial support but also strengthened Heppner's sense of community and solidarity. Each participant, whether local or visiting, played a role in making a difference—one step at a time.

Over the Tee Cup

Tuesday, May 6, was a beautiful, sunny day for the six ladies who teed off at Willow Creek Country Club.

Taking low gross of the field was Karen Thompson, while Pat Dougherty had low net of the field. Shirley Martin walked away with

least putts of the field. For flight B, Betty Carter had low gross, Kim Carlson low net and Karen Smith-Griffith least putts. In other special events, Pat Dougherty and Shirley Martin had least strokes on holes five and eight. Karen Thompson and Kim Carlson had least putts combined on holes three and eight.

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Spiritually Speaking

Father Thankachan Joseph



Jesus and God, the Father Relationship

From Easter until the Ascension of Jesus, which is going to take place soon, Jesus allows us to "overhear" some of the conversation between Him and His Father. The Gospel of the week narrates very clearly that the two of them are "one," that He always listens to the Father's voice and, as a devoted Son, does whatever the Father asks of Him. We know that we are hearing about something extremely important. This relationship existed before the world began. Now that Jesus is about to "return" to His Father, He tells us something else: that we can not only overhear their conversation but can actually enter into it.

The relationship that needs to exist between the Christian and Christ is essentially a love relationship. That is why Jesus said in John 15:15, "I do not call you servants any longer...I call you friends." Yet many of us feel more comfortable serving Jesus as boss rather than relating to Him as a friend. At the Last Supper, washing the feet of His disciples, He set a model of leadership, that of a servant mentality to win the world with love and service.

One thing we know about love is that lovers want to be with each other. But Jesus is not physically present. We cannot physically see Him or touch Him. This is the dilemma we see in the problem of all the believers today. How can you love an absent Jesus? This is what this week's Gospel is all about. In the Gospel Jesus prepares His disciples, those who love Him, for His departure from this world and shows them how they can keep love and intimacy alive even in His physical absence. "Those who love me will keep my word, and my Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them (John 14:23)."

If you are in love with the Lord Jesus, you understand the following: (1) You keep His word. Follow His teachings. (2) This will activate God's special love for you, and (3) Jesus and His Father will come and live permanently with you. In this way, the vacuum left by the physical absence of Jesus will be filled spiritually by the divine presence which is as real or even more real than the physical presence. Our part in this entire process is to focus on keeping the word of Christ.

But how do we make sure we know the implication and meaning of the word of Christ in the ever-changing and ever more complex realities of modern life? How can we be sure of what Jesus would do and how He would act in concrete situations of our daily lives? Again, Jesus foresaw this difficulty and provided for it: "The Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you" (John 14:26). But what about the situation in the world today in which fifty devotees all "filled with the Holy Spirit" come up with fifty different answers to the same question? Does the Holy Spirit contradict Himself? Here it is important to note that the "you" to whom these promises are made is plural, meaning, primarily, the community of believers, the church. Of course, the Holy Spirit is with us individually, but the Holy Spirit is given primarily to the church and, through the church, to us as individuals when we become members of the church and especially through the reception of the sacrament of confirmation.

This is what we see in the first reading where disagreements among Christians are resolved through dialogue and community discernment and not through each one consulting the Holy Spirit privately. In the end, they come out with a resolution which begins, "it has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us." (Acts 15:28). The word of Christ continues to live and resound in the word of the Holy Spirit speaking through the church. The days between the Ascension of Christ and Pentecost are special days of prayer for all Christians as they were for the first disciples of Jesus. This year let us pray for the world, that it may bring the gift of unity among faiths, so that together we all can discern what the Spirit is saying to the church in the modern world and so stay united witness to the life-giving word of Christ.

Lexington Hunter Education

The course is a 1 day **Field Day** on June 14, 2025 at 8:00 am. The class requires students to take an approved online course and bring the certificate with you. Instructions for signing up at <http://vem.myodfw.com/eventprofile/174>. For more information contact instructor Jim Marquardt at 541-969-4845. For help signing up contact 855-686-1055 or odfwhelp@payitgov.com

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