

FREE PRESS: Reporter persistently called official

Continued from page 9

company to Ontario with tax break promise, then doesn't deliver."

In a statement that the newspaper published online, Smith said no "pre-application" for a property tax exemption had been approved or signed.

"Over the last six months, me and my staff have been subjected to endless phone calls, hostile emails at all hours of the day and unwelcome office visits," Smith asserted.

Zaitz said Caldwell sent two emails to Smith during business hours seeking comment. Zaitz said he felt it was his duty to email Smith on Saturday to provide every opportunity to comment before the newspaper went to press. Located in a small Old West-style building, the weekly publishes 1,400 copies, with additional paid online subscribers. The county has 31,000 residents, with almost 10 times as many cattle, and is heavily Republican.

County Counsel Stephanie Williams asked the sheriff to determine if emails and calls to county economic development officials constituted a crime.

"We looked at harassment, telephonic harassment — really neither one comes close in this situation," Wolfe said.

BUCKMANN: Chamber worker has served for two decades

Continued from page 1

and Redmond were not heavily involved in presenting events.

"Sisters was the only one that did anything," Buckmann said. "It's kind of what drew people to town."

And Buckmann was working almost constantly to keep the events going. She enlisted Bob's help, and her kids went around town with promotional posters.

"It was kind of an education, too, that they got," she said of Adam and Sara's endeavors.

Over time, other non-profits and business entities began to promote events, and the Chamber stepped back from being an event promotor and into a more traditional role of promoting the community as a whole statewide.

"We have so many options to give people when they come here to visit," Buckmann said. "We can focus more on bringing people here."

The Chamber still has a couple of events that Buckmann still loves. The Harvest Faire is marking its 40th year this October. And the Chamber leads the Christmas holiday festivities with its promotion of A Cowboy Christmas and "the Town of Tiny Lights" theme.

Christmas festivities center around the annual parade and the tree lighting now at

Fir Street Park.

Buckmann recalled the first tree lighting in 2000, at the Chambers' then-headquarters where Circle of Friends resides now.

"We had a fire ring and we had a burn barrel," she said. "Bob Grooney was the master of ceremonies and he flipped the switch. I think we had like 30 people."

These days, the tree lighting draws hundreds to the park in what has become a family tradition for several generations of Sisters folks and visitors alike.

Buckmann continues to manage the Chamber's events, including membership events, and also operates the Visitor Center and manages membership.

Buckmann said she never would have anticipated spending 20 years at the Chamber — but the time has flown by quickly. The Chamber has undergone leadership changes, some of them pretty bumpy, but Buckmann has weathered them all. She says that she works particularly well with current Chamber Director Judy Trego.

"It's a great partnership, Judy and I," she said. "It really is."

Buckmann cites as a highlight of the work the opportunity to meet literally thousands of people from all over the world.

"It's a life of memories," she said. "I mean, it's awesome! I would never have guessed I would become so attached to it."

While 20 years is certainly a milestone, it doesn't signify



PHOTO BY JIM CORNELIUS

Jeri Buckmann has a long and storied history with the Sisters Area Chamber of Commerce — what she calls "a life of memories."

much in the way of a watershed moment in Buckmann's career. She's planning to stick around through the changes she knows are coming with increased growth in the region.

"I'm curious as to what the next few years will be as far as the growth," she said. "I never thought of it back then — what it would be like."

"I'm going to keep with it for a while."

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