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SES forges path with in-person instruction

By Charlie Kanzig
Correspondent

With every other public school in Deschutes County operating under the Comprehensive Distance Learning (CDL) model due to the coronavirus pandemic, Sisters Elementary School stands alone conducting in-person learning — leaving Principal Joan Warburg feeling quite fortunate and pleased for her students.

“Our students are happy,

See **IN-PERSON** on page 23

Hitting the slopes...



PHOTO BY BILL BARTLETT

Hoodoo Ski Area has opened on weekends for eager skiers and snowboarders.

Police investigate poaching incident

Oregon State Police are investigating a poaching incident that occurred near Sisters earlier this fall. They are seeking public assistance to solve the case.

Poachers killed a bull, a cow, and a spike elk east of Sisters on or about October 28 and Oregon State Police Fish and Wildlife troopers are looking for information leading to the culprits.

The animals were discovered separately, but all three were in the same area and

See **POACHING** on page 16

County responding to surge in COVID-19 cases

As COVID-19 cases continue to surge in the region and across the state, Deschutes County Health Services reports that case investigation and contact-tracing teams are currently not able to contact all residents who test positive for COVID-19 within 24 hours.

Daily case reports hit a record on Friday, December 4, with 129 reported. Sisters cases stood at 92 on December 2, up from 78 a week before (cases are broken out by zip code on a weekly basis). There was a statewide record of 2,176 new confirmed and presumptive COVID-19 cases and 30 new deaths reported on Friday.

Governor Kate Brown marked Friday’s statistics: “Today, Oregon marked a tragic milestone in the COVID-19 pandemic,” she said. “The Oregon Health Authority reported 30 deaths today, a record, and the number pushed us past the 1,000th death since the start of this crisis. This disease has

touched every Oregonian. It has taken a devastating toll on our families, our communities, our businesses and our physical and mental wellbeing.”

The local area is seeing more COVID cases than at any time previously in the pandemic.

Deschutes County’s testing percent-positive rate is 11.3 percent, which indicates that testing is limited and that most cases may go undetected. Percent-positive rate gives an indication how widespread infection is in an area and whether levels of testing are keeping up with levels of disease transmission. Health officials consider test positivity of five percent or greater “too high.”

On Monday, St. Charles Health System reported 49 COVID-19 patients; six in the ICU, with four on a ventilator.

COVID-19 metrics have pushed local schools into the “red zone,” which may

See **COVID-19** on page 22

Finding truth of genetic identity

By Jim Cornelius
Editor in Chief

Wendi Babst was staying at her soon-to-be home in Sisters in March 2018 when she made a discovery that changed her life.

Retired from law enforcement and now teaching criminal justice at Clackamas Community College, Babst and her husband, Greg, were on the cusp of moving permanently to the Sisters home they had purchased in 2012. Wendi wasn’t feeling well, and was looking to pass some time by delving into a commercial DNA test.

“I bought a Black Friday gift to myself, and then I didn’t do it for months,” she recalled.

When she looked at her results, there was an anomaly: She had a whole lot of half-sibling matches that shouldn’t be there. It didn’t take her detective’s intuition long to grasp what was going on.

“It immediately started to click,” she told *The Nugget*.

She knew that her mother had seen a fertility doctor — and she knew that that



PHOTO PROVIDED

Wendi Babst, right, with her mother, Cathy Holm, got their portrait shot at The Hen’s Tooth in Sisters during a visit. In 2018, Babst made a stunning discovery about her genetic history. Her story is now portrayed in the HBO documentary film “Baby God.”

doctor had delivered her; his name was on her birth certificate. And she knew what her DNA test implied. And as she investigated her findings, she realized a shocking truth:

Her biological father was Dr. Quincy Fortier.

Babst’s remarkable journey is recounted in the new

See **‘BABY GOD’** on page 19

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