

# Baker County woman searches for purr-fect solution

By Jayson Jacoby  
EO Media Group

BAKER CITY — Karen Skeen knows that her noble task will never be completely finished but she's also comforted, on these cold winter nights, in the knowledge that 19 feral cats are not starving or freezing.

Skeen, one of the founders of New Hope for Eastern Oregon Animals, is celebrating a nearly three-month campaign to capture the 19 cats from a property near North Powder and find safe places for them to live.

Although Skeen, who has been helping feral cats for more than two decades, said she has seen larger colonies of feral cats in Baker City, the North Powder situation was challenging because the site, about 2 miles outside the town in southern Union County, is isolated with few places for the cats to shelter.

"They would never have survived" the winter, Skeen said. "This is one of the biggest campaigns I've been involved in."

It all started in late September. Skeen said she got a phone call from a woman whose father and stepmother, Gary and Carol Tate, had died just a day apart at their home near North Powder. When someone opened the door of a storage building on the property about 20 cats ran out, Skeen said.

The animals were feral, although it's possible they been fed, she said. New Hope For Eastern Oregon Animals and another Baker City animal rescue group, Best Friends of Baker, each donated \$1,000 for the effort to trap the cats, have each spayed or neutered, and try to find homes for the felines.

While volunteers, including Megan Kendall of Baker City, were working on the latter task, volunteers from Baker City drove daily to the property near North Powder to put out food for the cats, Skeen said.

Kendall said she solicited interest through Facebook posts as well as advertisements in the Baker City Herald and the Elkhorn Media Group radio stations.

Eventually seven property owners, all in rural areas of Baker County, each agreed to take on at least two of the feral cats.

Each property includes a barn where the cats can get out of the weather, and all property owners agreed to feed the animals.

"It's just wonderful," Kendall said of the residents who offered to help the cats. Skeen agreed.

"The barns that the cats were transported to were all extremely nice and clean and the caregivers are all caring people," she wrote in an email.

Once volunteers had arranged for places to take the feral cats, they started planning the trapping campaign, Skeen said.

That began just before Thanksgiving. The first time the trap was set up it corralled 10 cats.

Another time six more cats were captured. Volunteers returned later and noticed that food left at the site had been eaten, and a subsequent trapping netted three more cats, Skeen said.

Because it was so late in the year and

temperatures had dropped, she is boarding those three cats until spring when they will be made available for adoption as well.

One of the property owners who volunteered to adopt some of the feral cats, who asked not to be identified, said the cats — four in all — were a welcome addition to a cattle ranch that had been without feline protection for some time.

"We had an influx of rats, mice and snakes," the owner said. "That's one of the biggest reasons we had been looking to acquire some cats."

The owner was also happy to be able to help rescue the animals.

"I love the opportunity to give these guys a second chance, understanding where they came from," the owner said.

That the cats were spayed or neutered, and vaccinated, was a "huge plus," the owner said.

"I appreciate having this program," the adopter said. "It gives these cats a second chance, and there's a need for it in the county."

## PUBLIC SAFETY REPORT

**FRIDAY**  
Union County Sheriff's Office arrested Wesley English, 18, of La Grande, for third-degree theft and second-degree burglary.

The Union County Sheriff's Office at about 12:20 p.m. responded to Island City on a report of someone who was mentally ill.

The Union County Sheriff's Office at 4:38 p.m. received a report from Highway 203 and Pierce Road, La Grande, regarding animal cruelty.

A La Grande caller at 5:45 p.m. reported harassment. An officer contacted the caller and referred the person to Shelter From the Storm, the nonprofit that provides services to victims of domestic violence.

**SATURDAY**  
La Grande police at about 12:19 p.m. responded to a noise complaint on the 1800 block of Adams Avenue. The person causing the noise was in a mental state but agreed to go to bed.

**SUNDAY**  
Oregon State Police arrested

Percy Brigham, 50, of Carson, Washington, for felon in possession of a weapon and driving while suspended.

A caller in Union at 2:39 p.m. reported two dogs in the area of the 800 block of West Arch Street were chasing sheep. The caller warned he would take the dogs to the shelter if need be.

Emergency services at about 4:40 p.m. responded to a crash that resulted in an injury at Wilkinson Lane and Peach Road, La Grande.

And, firefighters responded to nine calls for medical assistance on Sunday, 12 on Saturday and nine on Friday.

Firefighters responded to two fire calls over the weekend. The first was a house fire Saturday afternoon in North Powder which destroyed a home but caused no injuries. The second was a fire started by a candle in a home on Lake Avenue in La Grande late Sunday night. The candle fire, reported at 11 p.m., burned a small hole in a couch but was out when firefighters arrived.

## Get to know your child's brain

LA GRANDE — North-east Oregon Network, based at 2008 Third St., Suite A, in La Grande, will offer "Understanding Your Adolescent: Providing a Culture of Care," a two-session course for parents, caregivers and educators. Participants will learn the latest information and research on brain states and how these impact learning and cognitive development in adolescents ages 12-18. Held Jan. 9 and Jan. 16, the sessions will run 6-8 p.m. in the La Grande High School commons, 708 K Ave.

"Understanding Your Child: Providing a Culture of Care," which covers cognitive development in children ages 0-11, will be offered March 5 and 12. Each session will be held in the Island City Elementary School Library, 10201 W. Fourth St., from 6-8 p.m.

Register at [www.neonoregon.org/upcoming-trainings](http://www.neonoregon.org/upcoming-trainings). For more information, call 541-624-5101.

## Nominate a great teacher

PENDLETON — The InterMountain Education Service District encourages students, parents, staff and community members to nominate a great teacher in the IMESD district for 2021 Oregon Teacher of the Year. The Oregon Department of Education, in partnership with the Oregon Lottery, sponsors the Oregon Regional Teacher of the Year awards to honor exemplary educators in every region of the state. Nominations may be submitted through Jan. 31. Anyone can nominate a teacher at [www.oregonteacheroftheyear.org/nominate](http://www.oregonteacheroftheyear.org/nominate).

Oregon Education Service Districts will select a winner from their region and the selected teachers will be honored in May. In September, one of the Regional Teachers of the Year will be named the 2021 Oregon Teacher of the Year. Regional Teachers of the Year will receive a cash prize of \$500 and. The 2021 Oregon Teacher

of the Year will receive a \$5,000 cash prize (with a matching \$5,000 going to his or her school) and serve as a spokesperson and representative for all Oregon teachers.

## Sophomores invited to apply for OTEC Youth Rally scholarship

BAKER CITY — Oregon Trail Electric Cooperative, with headquarters in Baker City, is accepting applications for current high school sophomores for the Idaho Youth Rally scholarships. This educational opportunity is available to the families of OTEC members in Baker, Grant, Harney and Union counties.

The annual Idaho Youth Rally, a week-long leadership camp held in Caldwell in July, brings together students from around the Western states to participate in a variety of activities and classes promoting positive relationships and building skills in leadership, teamwork and persever-

ance. Students are given the opportunity to learn about government, drug and alcohol awareness, and the electrical/energy industry. The application deadline for the Youth Rally is March 1.

Applications and specific criteria for all OTEC scholarships and youth programs are available at [www.scholarships.otec.coop](http://www.scholarships.otec.coop), [youthtour.otec.coop](http://youthtour.otec.coop) and [youthrally.otec.coop](http://youthrally.otec.coop).

## Smart Driver class could save you money on car insurance

LA GRANDE — There will be an AARP Smart Driver class on Jan. 11 at Grande Ronde Hospital in La Grande. The class runs from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. with an hour break for lunch. The cost is \$15 for AARP members and \$20 for nonmembers. The class is open to all, and completion can get you a break on your auto insurance premiums. Call the instructor, Fred Moore, at 541-910-9797 to sign up or for more information.

## OBITUARIES

### Clarence Lee Blaylock

Formerly of Cove  
1938-2019

Clarence Lee Blaylock, 81, formerly of Cove, died Oct. 21 at his home in Salome, Arizona. Clarence was born May 3, 1938, in Crossville, Tennessee, to Clarence and Vera Blaylock. In 1964, he married Betty Ann Barnett, and they had three sons: Timothy, Brian and Delbert. Clarence and Betty lived in Cove from the late 1960s to the late 1990s.

Clarence and Betty shared 42 years of marriage and a love for the outdoors, hunting, fishing and gold prospecting. They were members of numerous gold mining clubs and spent many summers as camp host in Auburn for the Eastern Oregon Mining and Prospecting Club.

Surviving relatives include his sons and daughters-in-law, Timothy and Tammy Blaylock, Brian and Fran

Blaylock and Delbert Blaylock; brothers, Edward Blaylock, Douglas Blaylock and Ronald Blaylock; sisters, Alice Burdette, Donna Misra, Edna Burges and Annette Sapp; and numerous grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

He was preceded in death by his wife, Betty, in 2006; parents, Clarence and Vera; sister, Rita Burdette; and brothers, Bill Blaylock and Kenneth Blaylock.

*Editors note: This obituary is being reprinted due to an error.*

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**Dec. 28**  
**Nellie Lathrop:**  
11 a.m. memorial service, Joseph Baptist Church.

# Ban on cannabis-infused alcoholic beverages

The Associated Press

SALEM — Oregon is renowned for its craft beer and increasingly for its high-grade marijuana, but the state is keeping the two apart — for now.

In a new ruling, the Oregon Liquor Control Commission, which regulates both alcoholic products and recreational marijuana, beer and other alcoholic drinks as of Jan. 1 may not contain either THC, the psychoactive component of cannabis, or CBD, the non-psychoactive part that is said to relieve stress and pain.

Mark Pettinger, spokesman for the agency, cited

concerns raised by the U.S. Food and Drug of potential liver damage from CBD, also known as cannabidiol.

"We've wanted to address the issue of CBD getting into alcohol and because there are a lot of unknowns about the effect of taking CBDs," Pettinger said Friday. "There's very little scientific evidence. People are using them for wellness, but how they interact with other substances, not a lot is known."

Pettinger said until federal agencies establish regulations surrounding CBD, his agency needed to step in and impose the

ban. The Oregon agency next will work on banning a bar from mixing a non-alcoholic CBD beverage on the premises with an alcoholic beverage to create a CBD cocktail.

Oregon has been at the forefront in efforts to legalize marijuana. It was the first state to decriminalize personal possession, in 1973 and legalized medical marijuana in 1998 and recreational use

in 2014. But Oregon is in a bind because federal regulations surrounding CBD, which is derived from hemp, have not caught up with the legalization of hemp on the national level.

Pettinger noted the U.S. Alcohol and Tobacco Tax and Trade Bureau, or TTB, which approves the formula for any kind of alcoholic beverage, has not approved the use of CBD in any drinks.

**La Grande Observer**  
**Holiday Hours**

**Christmas Eve: CLOSE at 3 PM**  
**Christmas Day: CLOSED**  
There will be NO PAPER published on Wednesday, December 25th  
We will reopen for business Thursday, December 26th • 7:30 AM - 5 PM

**New Years Day: OFFICE CLOSED**  
There WILL BE a paper published January 1st



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