

TODAY IN HISTORY

Today is Saturday, March 6, the 65th day of 2021. There are 300 days left in the year.

TODAY'S HIGHLIGHT IN HISTORY:

On March 6, 1857, the U.S. Supreme Court, ruled 7-2 that Scott, a slave, was not an American citizen and therefore could not sue for his freedom in federal court.

ON THIS DATE:

In 1475, Italian artist and poet Michelangelo was born in the Republic of Florence.

In 1836, the Alamo in San Antonio, Texas, fell as Mexican forces led by General Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna stormed the fortress after a 13-day siege.

In 1853, Verdi's opera "La Traviata" premiered in Venice, Italy.

In 1944, U.S. heavy bombers staged the first full-scale American raid on Berlin during World War II.

In 1962, the Ash Wednesday Storm hit the mid-Atlantic coast, causing 40 deaths and more than \$200 million in property damage.

Pandemic cancels Class 1A state basketball tournaments

By JAYSON JACOBY
Baker City Herald

BAKER CITY — Kathy Taylor is supposed to be exhausted right now.

She should be rushing from one task to another this week, with scarcely a spare moment to rest.

Taylor wishes that were so.

For more than a quarter century, the first week of March has meant one thing for Kathy and her husband, Rick — basketball.

Specifically, the Class 1A state basketball girls and boys tournaments at Baker High School. It's the culmination of the season for Oregon's smallest high schools, the week when players from towns, some of which lack a single traffic signal, try to win one of those glossy trophies carved in the shape of the state.

Kathy Taylor has been co-director of the annual tournaments, which Baker County Tournaments has run since 2017. But she and her husband have volunteered to help with the events since 1994.

The tournaments themselves have an even longer legacy at BHS. The boys tournament has taken place there every year since 1974, and the girls tournament moved to Baker City in 1977.

Then came the pandemic.

And with high school basketball not scheduled to start in Oregon until May,



Kathy Orr/Baker City Herald File

The bleachers in the Baker High School gym aren't packed as usual this week with enthusiastic basketball fans from Oregon's smallest high schools. Due to the pandemic, the annual Class 1A state girls and boys basketball tournaments, a Baker City tradition since the 1970s, were canceled.

and no state tournaments planned, 2021 will be the year of the asterisk.

"I feel lost," Kathy Taylor said on Tuesday morning, March 2. "It's like there's something I'm supposed to be doing but I'm not."

Taylor said the Oregon School Activities Association, which oversees prep sports in the state, told her in December the tournaments wouldn't happen in 2021.

An OSAA official said,

however, the organization has no plan to move the tournaments from Baker City.

And Taylor wants nothing more than to return to her usual hectic introduction to March in 2022.

"I'm hoping we get back to some semblance of what we call normal," she said.

A year ago the situation seemed normal only with the benefit of hindsight.

The 2020 Class 1A tournaments took place as scheduled from March 4-7

(as did the Class 2A events in Pendleton, and the Class 3A tournaments in North Bend).

But the pandemic, though scarcely begun, had an effect.

Portable handwashing stations were set up outside the BHS gym. The Baker School District used a misting system to disinfect the gym and other parts of the high school each day. Yet the tournaments happened.

"It seems like ages ago,"

Taylor said of the 2020 tournaments. "We were fortunate. The community came together really well to make it happen."

Less than a week later, high school sports in Oregon were postponed. Later they were canceled for the rest of the spring.

The Baker girls basketball team was unable to defend its 2019 Class 4A state title.

And now, almost a year later, the pandemic continues to thwart traditions across the state.

Taylor said the absence of the tournaments affects Baker City in multiple ways. The economic losses are the most obvious.

Taylor said the 2020 tournaments drew about 9,500 spectators over the four days. As always, a significant percentage of those fans were visiting Baker City, staying in local motels, dining at local restaurants and shopping at local stores.

But as a longtime volunteer, and now co-director, Taylor said she also feels a personal sense of loss.

She will miss seeing some of the people from across Oregon that she has come to know over the years.

"There are relationships that have been built," Taylor said. "You've watched these kids grow up, it's like family when they come back (for the tournaments). That personal connection has been lost."

CORRECTION

The Thursday, March 4, 2021, story "Back in the game" misstated information about the La Grande High School girls soccer schedule. The LHS girls team had its first game March 2, sweeping Four Rivers 9-0 in Ontario. The girls' first home game was March 4 against Pendleton, and the team plays at home again Tuesday, March 9, against Ontario.

GRH employees reach out to seniors

By DICK MASON
The Observer

LA GRANDE — Grande Ronde Hospital employees recently extended hands of assistance to many La Grande seniors they may never meet.

The hospital's employees, as part of their Share the Love program, donated almost 400 items and sent 200 signed cards to the residents at Post Acute Rehab, Wildflower Lodge and Grande Ronde Retirement Residence. The items included large-print word search puzzles, crossword puzzles, craft kits, art supplies, socks and tissues. The cards delivered messages of kindness and support.

The GRH Employee Activities Committee collected and prepared the donations over the course of two weeks. Committee member Stephanie Roy said it was particularly important at the time to reach out to the seniors because the COVID-19 pandemic prevented visitations at assisted living centers.



Grande Ronde Hospital/Contributed Photo

Hundreds of donations fill a room in February 2021 at Grande Ronde Hospital, La Grande. Hospital employees collected the items as well as greeting cards for residents at assisted living facilities in La Grande.

"With COVID-19 we thought it was important to share love with individuals who have not been able to see loved ones regularly," said Roy, GRH's administrative services coordinator.

Roy, Jon Rankin of GRH's maintenance staff and Jaimie Bingham, a certified medical assistant, delivered the items to the assisted care cen-

ters. Bingham and Felicia Shanks, both on the GRH Activities Committee, suggested the idea for the Share the Love effort, which used nine drop boxes at Grande Ronde Hospital and its clinics to collect the items. The outpouring of support struck Roy.

"This shows that GRH employees are full of care and want to give back to the community," she said.

Lucy Thompson, the resident program director at Wildflower Lodge, said the donations were a hit.

"Our residents are so grateful," she said.

Thompson said she knew the items were coming but the number of donations surprised her, and the art and craft supplies are especially popular. She said Wildflower's residents love them.

La Grande City Hall is open to the public

Move comes as Union County drops into moderate risk for COVID-19

The Observer

LA GRANDE — The city of La Grande announced the reopening of city hall.

The reopening of the building and its offices at 1000 Adams Ave. in La Grande comes as the state moved Union County into the moderate risk level for COVID-19.

As of Wednesday, March 3, city hall is open Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. with new entrance and exit protocols in place, the city announced in a press release. To minimize foot traffic, the public can enter only through the west side of the building where the wheelchair accessible ramp is. To exit the building, use the back door. People who need to use the wheelchair ramp may exit via

the west-side door.

In addition, the following public health restrictions are in place in the city hall:

- Anyone older than 5 who enters the building must wear a mask. Masks are available at the entrance.

- If you are unable or refuse to wear a mask for any reason, do not enter the building. Instead, call the number on the door and someone will meet you outside of the building to assist you.

- People in the building must maintain 6 feet from each other, including when waiting in line.

The finance and water office will continue to provide services over the phone as well as in person. Water/sewer payments may be made online at www.cityofla-grande.org.

New four-wheel drive ambulance conquers winter weather

By ELLEN MORRIS BISHOP
For the Wallowa County Chieftain

WALLOWA COUNTY — Neither snow, nor freezing rain, nor fog, nor gloom of night stays Wallowa County's emergency medical providers from the swift completion of their life-saving rounds. Their new \$300,000 four-wheel drive, high-tech ambulance is ready to reach and safely transport critical care patients through the worst of Wallowa County's weather.

"It's what we've needed — very reliable ambulance to transport critical-care patients, especially to regional hospitals including Lewiston, Walla Walla or Tri-Cities, and especially in bad weather," said Tim Peck, Wallowa Memorial Hospital's emergency service director.

Although the hospital has two other 4x4 ambulances, this one greatly enhances transfer capability in extreme weather, Peck said. The ambulance, which went into service Feb. 1, has delivered on transporting emergency patients to regional hospitals for critical care.

"We've already been through some difficult storms both going and coming. That includes a trip on Cabbage Hill in near-whiteout conditions," Peck said.



Ellen Morris Bishop/For the Wallowa County Chieftain

Wallowa Memorial Hospital's new ambulance shows off its lights on Tuesday, Feb. 23, 2021. It may look like any other ambulance on the road, but its four-wheel drive, high-tech capabilities and its ability to navigate roads in bad weather elevate it above the rest.

"And we've taken it over Tollgate and down Buford and up Rattlesnake grades in some of the heaviest winter weather we've had this season — sometimes led by ODOT plows to ensure everyone's

safety."

The new medical capabilities include a neonatal transport system, which is an enclosed capsule that creates a warm environment for the newborn, Peck said.

"The new ambulance would be used if the crews responded to a precipitous home birth or other locations outside the hospital," Peck said. "The Baby-Pod's warmer and other features, including openings for use of IV and a ventilator, keep the infant warm and secure."

The ambulance meets the needs of critical care transport, including IV therapy, mechanical ventilation and blood work.

The new blue-and-white vehicle has the chassis, drivetrain and engine of a Chevrolet K4500 4x4. But that's where the resemblance to an ordinary truck ends.

This ambulance has a computer-controlled hydraulic suspension called a "liquid spring" that levels out bumps, adjusts vehicle height automatically for road conditions, and can be raised and lowered with a manual control as well.

"The crews keep remarking on the smooth ride and ease of driving — some say it drives like the 'family van,' but it's truly been an important upgrade to patient care as well as safety for everyone onboard," Peck said.

There's a built-in electric generator that provides ample electric-system support, including a standalone heating/cooling system

with UVC light that helps kill airborne viruses, which is especially important now, Peck said. The compartment configuration was designed to meet the needs of critical care transport, with added safety features for patient and crew members. For example, the seat belts and shoulder harnesses for the EMTs allow them to stretch forward and move to treat the patient while remaining safely belted.

Local fundraising efforts covered the cost of the ambulance. The Wallowa Valley Health Care Foundation led the charge, including the Healthy Futures Dinner Auction in 2019 and a \$20,000 grant from the Lewis and Clark Valley Health Care Foundation, which raised more than \$152,000 with a matching grant from the Murdock Charitable Trust for \$152,000. The ambulance itself, including the major equipment, cost just in excess of \$300,000.

"We feel very fortunate to serve our mission with equipment that provides safety for the patient and crew, as well as allows the crews to provide the highest levels of prehospital care possible," Peck said. "Without community support, our mission would struggle."