

FOSTER

Continued from Page 1A

"This has been my life forever," he said. "It's definitely something I'll do when I'm older."

Biological, adopted, foster — the Fosters don't really use these descriptions for the children who live in their house.

"You're part of the family no matter what," Ken said. "There's no difference — they are all our kids."

That being said, they honor the situation of a foster child who comes into their care.

"You'll never replace the biological parents," Rebecca said. "That has to be honored."

"We've learned over the years that there's a loss to them," Ken said of the children who find themselves in a new situation.

As for getting attached to foster children — yes, that is part of the commitment. And Ken said it should be.

"Attachment is what this child needs," he said. "It's not about us. It's about them."

Ken said sometimes when a child leaves their care, the entire Foster family sheds tears.

"That's because you gave your all and loved your best," Ken said.

Although their house is busy — children in and out of the screen door to play in the back yard, or off to sports practice or practicing on a hoverboard — this is life as the Fosters know it. When they don't have any foster children, Mykail notices the void.

"The house feels so empty," he said.

Rebecca and Ken have noticed how foster children sometimes respond quicker to the children in the house, rather than the adults.

"Any adult they may not trust," Rebecca said, "but they will trust a kid



Rebecca and Ken Foster/Contributed Photo

Rebecca and Ken Foster of La Grande have been foster parents for 17 years and have given a home to more than 50 children.

ONLINE

For a longer version of this story, go to lagrandeobserver.com.

their own age."

"They always seem to connect to one person really well," Mykail said.

The Fosters also depend on a support system of other foster families and friends. Some can offer respite for a couple hours, and some lend a listening ear.

"Having people who support what you do, believe in what you do" is helpful, Rebecca said. "It's really hard some days, and it's really important to have community."

As for their family — the permanent ones and the fosters who may only stay a while — Rebecca and Ken say hearts are made to expand.

"Our capacity to love is constantly growing," she said. "It's incredible. It grows if we allow it to, and allow our hearts to be open."

Difficult but rewarding

Jeni Greenshields wants to do what she can to help children. She became a foster parent about six months ago.

"I have to be part of the solution," she said. "My heart is I can help other foster families, and be a resource for foster kids."

Greenshields lives in Wallowa County, halfway

between Enterprise and Joseph.

During the last 20 years, she and her husband, Randy, have hosted exchange students and were legal guardians to three children. She has a master's degree in child development and family relations and works with the local alternative education program. She also taught preschool for 18 years.

"I love the littles and I love the bigs," she said.

Providing foster care, she said, is not easy.

"Being a quality foster parent is the hardest thing you'll ever do," she said. "It's loving someone else's kid."

But she's committed to helping children.

"It's very difficult, but very rewarding," she said. "They'll see a healthy family, a healthy marriage, healthy sibling relationships."

After all her years of working with children, she said she knows this: "They don't need your pity. They need your understanding that they are survivors. What they need is someone to unconditionally walk beside them. My main message to kids is, 'You are worth working hard for.'"

Greenshields said she sees foster care as a way of making a difference in a child's life.

"It's so important. It's part of taking care of each other," she said.

police reported.

Law enforcement booked Sprague into the Union County Jail, La Grande, on an Oregon Board of Parole warrant for supervision suspension and the Baker County warrant and later transferred him to the jail in Baker County.

According to state court records, Baker County issued a warrant for Sprague on May 17, accusing him of committing the following crimes: first-degree burglary, menacing, third-degree robbery, coercion, second-degree kidnapping, assaulting a public safety officer, first-degree unlawful use of a stun gun, tear gas or mace, violating probation and the state parole board order of supervision suspension.

Baker County District Attorney Greg Baxter in an affidavit told the court Sprague on the evening of May 14 went into a home on the 1800 block of East Street, Baker City, where he showed he had mace and threatened a woman

if she did not go with him. Sprague also said he was robbing the woman, according to the affidavit, and grabbed her keys and purse. The other occupant in the home was able to call 911, and Baker City police officer Koby Essex arrived minutes later.

Essex contacted Sprague, who sprayed bear mace into the officer's face.

"Officer Essex told me that it was painful to his eyes," Baxter wrote. "After spraying officer Essex, defendant ran to his bike and fled from police."

La Grande police the afternoon of May 20 reported investigators continue to collect statements and additional evidence. And while Sprague is the primary suspect in this investigation, the Union County District Attorney's Office has yet to file charges.

La Grande Police Chief Gary Bell on May 21 said the investigation continues, and Hatch told detectives his story.

FAMILIAR

Continued from Page 1A

traditional graduation ceremonies this spring.

Elgin High School kicks off public school commencement activities in Union County with a graduation ceremony May 26. The ceremony begins at 7 p.m. on Elgin High's football field. About 30 students will receive diplomas at the ceremony.

Imbler High School's graduation will follow on May 28. IHS's commencement will start at 5 p.m. in the school gym. The number of people who can be in the gym, which has a capacity of 875, will be limited to 200, said Principal Mike Mills. Imbler's 20 graduating seniors each will receive 10 tickets they can give to family and friends for admission to the ceremony.

Next on the commencement docket is Cove High

School's graduation, set to start at 11 a.m. May 29 on the school's football field. Everything about the ceremony will be traditional except its outdoor setting. A year ago seniors attended graduation in vehicles at Cove High's football field and received diplomas after stepping outside.

Cove School District Superintendent Earl Pettit said this year's more traditional graduation will continue a trend toward normalcy in his district.

"This is reflecting that," Pettit said. "I am pretty excited."

The final day for Union County public high school graduations will be June 5 when Powder Valley, Union and La Grande high schools conduct commencement exercises.

Union High School's graduation will start at 10 a.m. at the football field of its athletic complex. Carter Wells, Union's school district superin-

tendent, said renovation work in the school gym is forcing the event outdoors. But there will be tents to protect those attending if there is rain, he said.

Powder Valley High School's graduation starts at 1 p.m. in its old gym. The school a year ago conducted commencement at the La Grande Drive-In, where students in vehicles with their families viewed recorded presentations. Students later received their diplomas in Powder Valley School's new gym in individual ceremonies with family members.

North Powder School District Superintendent Lance Dixon said this year's ceremony will be much simpler because it will all be in one place on the same day. Dixon said he is delighted this year's graduation will be more traditional.

"I'm ecstatic to get back to some normalcy," Dixon said.

PARTY

Continued from Page 1A

and Drug Free Schools community as big donors," Robinson said. "It's fair to say that almost everyone we reached out to was willing to help."

And with the grand prize being a car, Geoffrey said he hopes the seniors will stick around to the end.

It won't be simply waiting around at a chance at the keys. The committee planned events throughout the night, with catered meals via food trucks and a live DJ show to start off the party.

By midnight, they'll show the first movie, then have a scavenger hunt with cash prizes. Robinson said with the outpouring of donations, every single senior should be walking away with a useful prize.

"Our budget this year was full enough. We're



Alex Wittwer/The Observer

The grand prize of the 2021 La Grande High School graduation party sits in front of the high school Wednesday, May 19, 2021, reminding students what they could win.

going to have good prizes for every kid, ranging from grills, refrigerators, iPhone watches, TVs — we're not talking about sending them home with an eraser and a ruler type of thing," Robinson said. "We're going to get these kids somewhere in the neighborhood of \$100 gifts."

The big prize, however, comes at the end of the event, with a raffle taking

place at 5:45 a.m. the next day to decide who gets to drive home in the Kia. Each attending senior has only one entry for the car raffle, and anyone looking to win will have to stay until the end.

Robert Bates, the owner of Legacy Chrysler Jeep Dodge Ram, said the car donation is notable because it's the first of its kind in several years.

TERROR

Continued from Page 1A

"La Grande police officers and detectives received assistance from Union County sheriff's deputies and K-9 Molly and from Oregon State Police troopers."

No one was injured at either residence on Glacier, according to police, and the suspect did not make off with the vehicle because it was inside a garage. Police found the keys to the vehicle and "the illegally altered shotgun that had been fired at the first caller" within a short distance, along with other items of evidence.

La Grande police then reported that a Union County sheriff's deputy a little after noon May 20 saw Sprague walking on 22nd Street near East L Avenue, contacted him and told him he was under arrest.

"He attempted to flee, but was quickly subdued and taken into custody without further incident,"

police reported.

Law enforcement booked Sprague into the Union County Jail, La Grande, on an Oregon Board of Parole warrant for supervision suspension and the Baker County warrant and later transferred him to the jail in Baker County.

According to state court records, Baker County issued a warrant for Sprague on May 17, accusing him of committing the following crimes: first-degree burglary, menacing, third-degree robbery, coercion, second-degree kidnapping, assaulting a public safety officer, first-degree unlawful use of a stun gun, tear gas or mace, violating probation and the state parole board order of supervision suspension.

Baker County District Attorney Greg Baxter in an affidavit told the court Sprague on the evening of May 14 went into a home on the 1800 block of East Street, Baker City, where he showed he had mace and threatened a woman

if she did not go with him. Sprague also said he was robbing the woman, according to the affidavit, and grabbed her keys and purse. The other occupant in the home was able to call 911, and Baker City police officer Koby Essex arrived minutes later.

Essex contacted Sprague, who sprayed bear mace into the officer's face.

"Officer Essex told me that it was painful to his eyes," Baxter wrote. "After spraying officer Essex, defendant ran to his bike and fled from police."

La Grande police the afternoon of May 20 reported investigators continue to collect statements and additional evidence. And while Sprague is the primary suspect in this investigation, the Union County District Attorney's Office has yet to file charges.

La Grande Police Chief Gary Bell on May 21 said the investigation continues, and Hatch told detectives his story.

MAKE YOUR MONEY BLOOM

PLANT NOW. THANK YOURSELF LATER.

0.65% APY*

15 MONTH
\$1K MINIMUM

Limited-time special

We cultivated this term savings special to help your money flourish.



Get growing today!

HZCU.ORG/SPRING21

800.852.5316

HORIZON
CREDIT UNION

Your Path. Our Purpose.

*APY=Annual Percentage Yield. Insured by NCUA. Offer eligible to applicants residing in the Southern Idaho and Eastern Oregon regions of Horizon Credit Union's geographical field of membership. Verification of residence location required upon membership application. Membership fee and restrictions may apply. Rates accurate as of 5/14/21 and are available to the first \$5,000,000.00 in total deposits. Early withdrawal penalties apply. Rate shown is available for a limited time only and includes 0.25% APY bonus for members who establish monthly direct deposit of \$200 or more to a Horizon Credit Union checking account. APY without the bonus = 0.40%. New money only.

OVBC
Oregon Values and Beliefs Center

We want your voice to be a part of the conversations shaping Oregon's future.

Share your opinion. Earn money.
Join the OVBC Panel.

panel.oregonvbc.org