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INSIDE



GO! HOG WILD IN ISLAND CITY GO!

New exhibit opens at Baker Heritage Museum

Visitors get chance to 'pack the wagon'

By LISA BRITTON
Baker City Herald

BAKER CITY — Kim Orr picks up the magnet labeled "pickles," hesitates, then sets it back in the basket.

Instead, she chooses the one labeled "rice."

"You don't like rice, but we need it," she says to her companion, securing it onto the display board.

Then she chooses another magnet.

"Piano! Yes!"

"You don't even play the piano," says Randy Yawn, sorting through the remaining magnets.

These two, who live in the Willamette Valley and spent Memorial Day weekend in Baker County, pretended to "pack the wagon" while exploring the new Oregon Trail exhibit at the Baker Heritage Museum, 2480 Grove St., Baker City, on Sunday, May 29.

The display was created by the Bureau of Land Management's National Historic Oregon Trail Interpretive Center, which is leasing space inside the museum while the center, about 5 miles east of Baker City, is closed for renovations for the next two years or so to improve its energy efficiency.

The Interpretive Center exhibit is in the Heritage Museum's Leo Adler Room, and a full-size wagon is in the second-floor ballroom.

"The main priority is to stay relevant in the community while we're closed," said Sarah Sherman, NHOTIC project manager.

A grand opening of the new exhibit is set for Friday, June 3, from 4-6 p.m. as part of Baker City's First Friday activities, with free admission, costumed interpreters and light refreshments.

"We appreciate the county's willingness to provide a venue for us to continue to tell

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PREPARING FOR A SCHOOL SHOOTING



Above: Isabella Crowley/Right: Dick Mason/The Observer

The La Grande High School front security gate, above, provides a layer of protection on Friday, May 27, 2022. Union superintendent Carter Wells, right, points out a new key card lock at Union High School on Thursday, May 26, 2022. Local schools have been working to increase security measures as school shootings increase across the nation.



'IT CAN HAPPEN ANYWHERE'

Local school officials, law enforcement react to shooting in Uvalde, Texas

By ISABELLA CROWLEY
The Observer

LA GRANDE — The recent school shooting in Uvalde, Texas, has local school administrators focusing on proactive safety measures, building inclusive communities and providing mental health resources.

Nineteen students were killed Tuesday, May 24, when an 18-year-old gunman barricaded himself in a fourth grade classroom at Robb Elementary School in the southwestern Texas town of Uvalde. The shooter, Salvador Ramos, ran into the building with an AR-15-style semi-automatic rifle before charging into a classroom and opening fire.

According to Education Week, a non-partisan education-focused news organization that has been tracking school shootings since 2018, the Uvalde incident brings the U.S. total up to 27 school shootings with injuries or deaths in 2022.

Wallowa School District Superintendent Tamera Jones called the events in Texas "tragic." The shootings may have occurred



"We learn from each of these on how to harden our schools so people with criminal intent can't get to our kids."

— Jason Hays,
La Grande Police Department Lt.

in a different state, but the fear of copycat shootings always is present, she said.

"Our job is to make these kids safe and secure," Imbler School District Superintendent Doug Hislop said.

Proactive safety measures

There has been a push to increase security measures at schools in Union and Wallowa counties the past few years. School districts, including La Grande,

Imbler and Union, have worked to retrofit buildings with cameras, key cards or specially locking doors.

"We have safety measures in place," said Carter Wells, superintendent of the Union School District. "Through the bond process we've added cameras, limited access and card keys so we can prevent and identify potential threats."

According to superintendents from Union and Wallowa counties, schools have established response protocols for emergency situations with annual training for staff and drills for students.

Local law enforcement is heavily involved with school safety.

In his 24 years on the force, La Grande Police Department Lt. Jason Hays said the safety of children always has been a priority for the department. The police work hand in hand with the Union County Sheriff's Office to provide security for schools. The law enforcement agencies run tabletop exercises for emergencies, walking through what would happen in

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Community remembers a WWII war hero

Dean Wells, who served in the Marines with his twin brother, Gene, is saluted at a Memorial Day ceremony

By DICK MASON
The Observer

SUMMERVILLE — It is sometimes said age is just a number.

Eighty-nine years ago twin brothers Dean and Gene Wells, of Union, were determined not to let that number get in the way of serving their country.

The Wells brothers, who were saluted posthumously at a Memorial Day ceremony at Summerville

Cemetery on Monday, May 30, were 17-year-old juniors at UHS in February of 1943. Fourteen months earlier the Japanese had attacked Pearl Harbor, triggering the Union States' entry into World War II.

"They were getting anxious to get into the war," said John Martin of Summerville, a retired U.S. Marine who is a nephew of Dean and Gene Wells.

The frustrated twins wanted to join the U.S. Marines, so they took a bus to Walla Walla, Washington, to get to the nearest U.S. Marine recruiting station.

"They had intended to leave Walla Walla and go straight to training without telling their parents," Martin said.

The brothers' plan hit a speed bump though when

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Dick Mason/The Observer

John Martin, U.S. Marine Corps veteran, speaks about a Union County war hero at a Memorial Day ceremony at Summerville Cemetery on Monday, May 30, 2022.



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