

Local

Haines Fire District’s station gets a new sign



Kerry McQuisten / The Baker County Press

L-R: Brandon Johnson, Logan Perkins and Daniel Drake pose with the sign, freshly unwrapped, just before it was placed on the loader and hung high on the front of the fire station

• EAGLE SCOUT LEADERSHIP PROJECT HAS BIG REWARDS

BY KERRY MCQUISTEN
News@TheBakerCountyPress.com

Just two days shy of his 18th birthday—the cutoff day to become an Eagle Scout—Baker High School student Daniel Drake achieved his goal in a big way. Drake, along with donations from location businesses and several community volunteers, was the creator of an Eagle Scout leadership project that resulted in a new and much-needed sign hanging high above the Haines Fire Department.

“Yes, it’s an Eagle Scout project,” said Drake, “but I’m doing this because it helps the Haines Fire Department, which didn’t have a sign. When you think of a fire department, you think of a building like this—but there wasn’t a sign.”

Drake is part of local Boy Scout Troop #433, led by James Simpson. Boy Scouts can earn up to 21 merit badges, but as his mother, Carol Davis, explained, some are required—as was this leadership project in order for her son to become an Eagle Scout.

Drake “filled out the forms and paperwork,” as he explained, and then submitted his project to a Board for approval. “It was approved the first time,” he said, but he was given some suggestions to help him on his way.

His task was then to coordinate his sign project from cradle to grave. Millers Lumber stepped forward and donated the lumber. “Most of the paint came from Ace,” said Drake, in the form of a donation. “The gloss was donated by Cashway,” he added.

Drake and the rest of the troop to which he belongs sorted and cashed in “\$100 worth of cans and bottles” to help raise money to

build the sign. Luckily, they only had to purchase one can of brightly colored, high-end paint.

The sign itself was constructed and painted by inmates at the local prison, with painstaking attention to the layers of carved details and colors, which can all be seen when one looks up close at the sign.

All in all, the sign was six feet square, and weighed over 200 pounds.

Bob Middleton picked up the completed sign from the inmates and delivered it, carefully wrapped, to the fire station where it sat awaiting its unveiling last Sunday.

The weather—70 degrees with clear blue skies—cooperated perfectly as Haines Fire Chief Jerry Hampton, Dave Johnson, Jarrod Maxwell, and Mayor Jim Brown gathered to help hang the sign.

Holes were drilled high through the station’s front wall so that the sign could be fastened on both inside and out.

Brown kept his foot firmly on the brakes of his former loader, which had technically just become the property of Jim Aldrich. Brown said he sees new equipment in his future, and offered up words of encouragement to the volunteers.

“You do mighty fine work,” he called out.

It took almost exactly two hours to complete the sign hanging.

“I want to make sure and give special thanks to Dave Johnson for all his hard work in this. I also want to thank the inmates for all their work,” Hampton said.

Hampton shook Drake’s hand and gave him a gray Haines Fire Department T-shirt. “This is very important to us,” Hampton said.

Then Drake, along with fellow troop members, Brandon Johnson and Logan Perkins, donated the remainder of funds they had raised—\$60 in total—to the Haines Rural Fire Department, as they explained, is customary with the completion of most Eagle Scout leadership projects.



Kerry McQuisten / The Baker County Press

Back Row L-R: Jerry Hampton, Dave Johnson, Jarrod Maxwell, and Mayor Jim Brown. Front Row L-R: Logan Perkins, Brandon Johnson and Daniel Drake. The volunteers gather for a photo moments after the new sign was hung on the fire station



Kerry McQuisten / The Baker County Press

Jim Brown lifts Dave Johnson and Jerry Hampton with the sign to the rooftop.



Kerry McQuisten / The Baker County Press

Proud mom, Carol Davis stands with son Daniel Drake. Jim Brown parks the loader behind them.



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Daniel Drake presents \$60 in funds raised to Jerry Hampton, Fire Chief.

Pine-Eagle School District lawsuit filed

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The suit’s introduction reads, “On April 26, 2013, elementary school teacher Linda Mallory McLean (McLean), was assaulted by a man with a gun while at work at Defendant Pine Eagle School District 61 (District) in Halfway, Oregon. The gunman pointed the gun at Ms. McLean’s face and pulled the trigger. In the instant before the gunman pulled the trigger, Ms. McLean recognized the gunman as the school district’s safety office , Shawn Thatcher (Thatcher).”

The introduction continues, “This simulated murder was part of an ‘active shooter drill’ that Defendants had collectively coordinated and carried out. Defendants intentionally failed to disclose to Pine Eagle School District 61 employees, including Ms. McLean, that the gunmen in the school on April 26, 2013, were actually the school safety officer Thatcher and District Board Chair, John Minarich, and that the simulated mass murders carried out by Thatcher and Minarich was merely a drill. Ms. McLean has suffered and continues to suffer significant damages, including severe mental and emotional distress, and loss of her career as a teacher, as a result of Defendants’ actions, which constitute intentional, willful and wanton violation of her rights under the United States Constitution and the State of Oregon.”

The court filing goes on to describe McLean s view of the drill. “All of a sudden, a man dressed all in black with a hoodie and goggles burst through the classroom door into the classroom. Ms. McLean was disoriented and her heart started racing. The man walked toward Ms. McLean, pointing a gun at Ms. McLean’s face. Ms. McLean could not move, as she sat terrified in her chair. Ms. McLean recognized the gunman as the school safety office , Shawn Thatcher, an instant before he pulled the trigger. Smoke filled the room. Thatcher told Ms. McLean that she was dead. Thatcher left the room. He and John Minarich, who was also dressed in camouflage, and brandishing a weapon, continued going into and out of rooms, pointing their weapons at other teachers, pulling the trigger of the gun, and stating that the teachers were dead. Panic ensued. A teacher wet her pants. A teacher tried to keep Minarich from entering his room and scuffled with Minarich, injuring the teachers s arm. Some teachers fell down trying to hide or escape from Minarich or Thatcher.”

The court filings then describe McLean s later treatments for Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, an inability to return to the school, and what she says was subsequent hostile treatment in the community by the defendants. McLean is asking for attorneys’ fees and costs, as well as punitive claims in an unspecified amount as allowed by law.

Residents of the Halfway/Richland area have speculated since the filing of the lawsuit as to whether criminal charges are being considered against anyone involved in executing the active shooter drill.

Interim Baker County Sheriff Travis Ash said this week that to this day, The Baker County Sheriff’s Department has not received a complaint of an alleged crime by any potential victim. Therefore, no criminal investigations have occurred.

At the time this article went to print, the defendants in the suit were aware of the legal action, but staff at the District 61 office said that they were not allowed to make comment at this time. One member of the staff there indicated that she didn’t believe an attorney had yet been assigned to the case.

The compilation and filing of a legal response from the defense can take weeks, and until that time, little information is available from the point of view of the School District or the other individuals named in the lawsuit.

Drunk driver kills one in La Grande

Oregon State Police (OSP) troopers in La Grande are continuing to investigate yesterday afternoon’s fatal traffic crash that resulted in the death of one occupant, serious injury to three others and injury to the driver who now faces criminal charges.

Preliminary information from investigators indicates that on April 18, at about 5:47 p.m., a black Nissan pickup, being driven by Brandon C. Halleck, 27, of La Grande, crashed into a ditch and killed one person and injured 4 other occupants. According to OSP Sergeant Kyle Hove, Halleck was driving in a reckless manner with 3 unrestrained occupants in the bed when he crashed. Two juveniles riding in the bed were injured and the third adult occupant, identified as Jacob R. Yeates, 23, of La Grande, was pronounced deceased at the scene. five people total were riding in the pickup, three in the bed, one in the cab and the driver, at the time of the crash.

The driver was lodged on charges of Manslaughter in the 1st Degree, Assault 1st Degree, DUII-Felony, Reckless Driving, and 3 counts of Reckless Endangering. He was lodged in the Union County Jail.

OSP was assisted at the scene by the Union County Sheriff’s Office, La Grande City Police Department, Island City Rural Fire Department and the La Grande Fire Department.

— RANDOM ACTS OF KINDNESS —

Each week The Baker County Press will include a list—all anonymous, of course—of the good deeds and random acts of kindness people from around the area have witnessed. To include something you’ve seen or experienced, email News@TheBakerCountyPress.com with “Random Acts of Kindness” in

the subject line. We’ll be sure to include your story.

- The homemade chicken noodle soup during my cold was awesome! I have the kindest father-in-law ever.
- There was a little kid throwing a fit in the Albertsons parking lot.

A lot of people were staring and acting offended at the scene. But one lady walked up and asked the mom if there was anything she could do to help, then took the bag and purse from the lady so she could hold the child and comfort her. I suspect the girl was autistic, but I admired that other lady who knew how to help.