

# Local

## Greater Bowen Valley Fire

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Keith Jensen, who is the current Assistant Fire Chief, said this volunteer department started about seven years ago after president and firefighter Cal Foster's log home burned.

"The first thing was we needed funding," Jensen said. Jensen's wife, Janet, turned to her mother, Ida Chastain, who wrote out a check for around \$80,000, which covered the construction of the actual fire department's building.

Rancher Wade Simpson donated the three or so acres upon which that building sits, according to Jensen.

Foster recalled the incident that sparked his idea to form this group of rural volunteers.

On a crisp October 4th day, Foster said, "Our house caught fire. We immediately called 911, but 15 minutes later, she (Dispatch) called back in tears. There was no one to come."

The Fosters' home was located outside any existing volunteer rural fire protection area, and well outside the area serviced by any paid fire department."

This tragedy started the wheels turning in Foster's head, until some time later he pulled his first group of firefighters together. "At that time," he said, "Dale Curtis was Chief and Bev White was our secretary. We had Don Copley and Keith Jensen—and my son Cameron who since moved. We had Dave and Diana Downing. Dave is still on the Board."

Jensen explained that much of the department's equipment consists of "hand-me-downs." Their newest truck was donated from the City of Enterprise, which had just purchased a brand new one.

Larry Solisz, Captain of the Baker Rural Fire Department said Saturday's open house was about "a new Chief and new support." He added, "People have really all come together for this—it's a big effort."

Devlin agrees. He addressed the crowd of over 50, and introduced Foster, with members Penny Devlin, Steve Ritch, and David Downing.

"We have nine certified firefighters right now," he said. "They are all active. Every time I put out the call, seven to nine show up."

Two new volunteers signed up during the open house.

"They do over 100 hours of training in their first year," Devlin said. "That's 60-70 hours in the Academy." The other hours are logged on the ground during real-life situations.

Foster says only four or five serious calls come in per year, but pointed to a recent cabin fire this year. He also mentioned a car fire that occurred right in front of the station.

Prior to the event, Tom Ruzich of Cutter's Edge presented a "housewarming gift" — a saw, to the group. Devlin says they'll get to go to Cutter's Edge and train on its use soon.

The open house also marked Wildfire Community Preparedness Day—May 2 this year. The day is meant to encourage ways



Kerry McQuisten / The Baker County Press

New Chief Jim Devlin and Baker Rural Fire's Captain Larry Solisz.



Kerry McQuisten / The Baker County Press

Trevor Lewis from the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest shows off wildfire strategy pilot project posters for the East Face of the Elkhorn Mountains.



Kerry McQuisten / The Baker County Press

Allen Jensen, Jim Devlin and Tabitha Jensen demonstrate the free fire/smoke detector program available.

to protect homes, neighborhoods and communities from future wildfire risk or current post-fire impacts. Free giveaway items, including a fire detector program, were available.

Chris Galiszewski manned a table to demonstrate the County's Reverse 911 system that notifies residents of emergencies. According to Gary Timm of Baker County Emergency Management, the system is set to automatically include land lines, but those with cell phones need to contact Emergency Management or the Fire Department to sign up.

Firefighters with the WWNF had a display of posters regarding the wildfire strategy pilot project for the East Face of the



Kerry McQuisten / The Baker County Press

Tom Ruzich (seated) of Cutter's Edge donated this rotary rescue saw as a surprise house warming gift.

Elkhorn Mountains. Trevor Lewis and Willy Crippen explained the project. Lewis said the effort will combine several agencies—including volunteer rural ones such as Greater Bowen Valley—to help pro-

tect "State, Federal lands and private land."

The explanation, however, was interrupted by Zach Shively and Smokey the Bear a.k.a. Scott Shively, who later changed out of the costume.

## Overton edges out Bonebrake

Oregon Trail Electric Cooperative held its 27th Annual Membership Meeting on May 2nd at the Grant County Fairgrounds in John Day. Members were in attendance to hear from OTEC Board President Greg Howard and General Manager Werner Buehler on the state of their electric cooperative.

Mr. Howard highlighted the clean audit OTEC received in 2014 as well as the steps the OTEC Board and Management have taken to ensure the excellent financial health of the electric cooperative. Mr. Buehler discussed the challenges and opportunities OTEC will face in the future from the Bonneville Power Administration, increased distributed generation, and new technologies while working to keep electric rates low.

The OTEC Board Election results were announced:

George "Austin" Bingaman (position 4) of Union County was re-elected with 3,164 votes.

Wayne Overton (position 5) of Baker County was elected with 1,844 votes, defeating Aletha Bonebrake also of Baker County who received 1,671 votes.

Gary Miller (position 6) of Grant County was re-elected with 3,061 votes.

The proposed bylaw revision was approved and passed by the membership.

The 3rd Annual Peggi Timm Civic Leadership Award was presented to Di Lyn Larson-Hill of La Grande. Di Lyn selected the Union County Friday Backpack Program a non-profit 501(c)3 to receive the \$25,000 donation, made available through earnings on unclaimed capital credits.

Di Lyn was honored for her incredible leadership and commitment to Union County and Eastern Oregon. Di Lyn served on the La Grande city council, was mayor pro tem and then elected mayor. Along with her work in creating Maz Square in downtown La Grande, Di Lyn served as president of multiple organizations including the League of Oregon Cities, the La Grande Library Foundation and Soroptimists International.

In 2006, she was named Woman of the Year by the Union County Chamber of Commerce and has served as chair for many philanthropic pursuits including the Union County Festival of Trees (which she introduced to the community in 1983), the Capitol Fundraising Campaign for the Cook Memorial Library, the La Grande Skate Park, and the Veterans Memorial Pool, among others.

The winner of the ballot drawing for the flat screen TV was Cory Braseth of La Grande.

## Mail thief arrested

Michael Counts, age 28 from G Street in Baker City, is located securely behind bars in the Baker County Jail after being arrested for mail theft.

Deputy Gabe Maldonado made the arrest after pulling over Counts, who was driving erratically and turned without signalling. Dozens of pieces of mail were found in Counts' vehicle from multiple addresses. The addresses seemed to be centered on the areas spanning Highway 86, West Campbell Loop and others.

The thefts did include ballots, so please contact the County Clerk's office if you believe your ballot is missing. All ballots should have arrived in the mail by now. The Sheriff's Department did return the stolen pieces of mail that were in the vehicle to their rightful owners.

Mail theft is a Class C Felony and possible Federal offense.

## County to observe National Prayer Day

National Day of Prayer is a federal holiday celebrated May 7, 2015, this year. Bill Harvey, Chair of the Baker County Board of Commissioners issued the following statement: "Believing that God himself created our Country and gave us the freedom to pray and worship that which is greater than ourselves, I ask that you join me, this May 7th for our nation's National Day of Prayer, in coming together to pray for our Nation, State, County and our communities. Let us also pray for our men and women in our armed forces who have answered our country's call to serve. Please also give thanks to the service members who have made the ultimate sacrifice defending liberty and freedom. I, now with a grateful heart, do hereby proclaim, May 7th as National Day of Prayer in Baker County."

## Powder River Music Review seeks partner

Baker City Events/Powder River Music Review (BCE/PRMR) is looking for local charitable organizations who would like to partner with BCE/PRMR concert series to raise funds for their organization.

BCE/PRMR has lined up musicians for the summer concert series and is seeking sponsor to cover concert expenses. The name of the chosen organization and the concert sponsor will be listed in advertising and press releases, invited to display their banner and have a commercial break at the concert. If interested in being a recipient organization or for more information call Lynette at 541-519-5653.

Powder River Music Review was awarded the Musical Event of The Year Award for 2014 by Oregon Festival and Events Association at their convention held March 3 this year in Seaside, Oregon.

Email to lynnettperry@gmail.com for more information.