

Local

Human trafficking event

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“These are our children and we need to do a better job protecting them. We need to be parents, not their friends, teach them to be more critical,” said Stradley.

Included in the audience were members of the Baker County Juvenile Department, Baker County District Attorney Matt Shirlcliff, Sergeant Mike Regan of the Baker City Police Department and victim advocates Tammy Cornelius and Fonda Siex of Mayday.

Stradley stressed that the children affected come from all social-economic classes and it is happening in epidemic proportions.

“This is also not a girl only problem. Boys are affected as well, I want to be real clear on that,” he said.

Many of America’s youth who fall into the human trafficking trap are not typically abused or abandoned. They often meet someone online and begin dialogue with them. NBC’s Dateline’s “To Catch a Predator” is eerily similar.

As Stradley stated, it is often an unrealistic view of their lives being boring and dull that prompts the grooming of our youth by online human trafficking predators. Promises of excitement, money, travel, lavish gifts, whatever it takes are simply bait to obtain “product.”

Once acquired, all connections to their former life are severed and victimization begins. It often starts with a simple cajoling to perform acts like stripping or posing for pornography when money “gets tight” but eventually these victims become drug-addicted by their victimizer and are sold by the hour as prostitutes.

Victims often lack the tools necessary to get out of the lifestyle—no job skills, beaten down to the point of having no self-esteem or self-worth. They have no possessions or access to money. Stradley mentioned that society, even police and prosecuting attorneys, may have targeted the victims in the past, but times they are changing as law enforcement and other organizations are realizing the depth of this problem, often not the fault of the victim.

According to Stradley all of our young people, including victims of this horrible crime as they are rescued and rehabilitated, “Need to be taught no one has a right to treat you with disrespect.”

And he said about this epidemic, “It’s not like *Pretty Woman*,” referencing a 1990 movie starring Richard Gere and Julia Roberts with a happy ending for a prostitute. “This is real life and these are real situations.”

Mike Stradley has worked in law enforcement since 1983 and over

the course of his 30-plus years that have spanned three departments, he has seen a lot. The majority of his years were spent with the Portland Police Department. His wife worked 34 years with the asset forfeiture unit for the city of Portland. She spent much of her time working the drugs and vice division.

“The vice division is human trafficking,” said Stradley and he indicated that Portland now has a human trafficking division that agencies work with for federal prosecution.

Stradley had spoken earlier in the day to the Baker Middle School as well and seemed genuinely impressed by the student body.

Currently there are 530 bills from 42 States and the District of Columbia before congress regarding this issue.

37 states have enacted 123 bills relating to sex trafficking.

Coincidentally, during the meeting an Amber Alert began going off on numerous cell phones in the audience.

In addition to Thursday evening’s presentation sponsored by the Soroptimists International, Gentry Ford hosted a Drive-A-Thon, Drive for Your Community, Saturday from 9 a.m. - 4 p.m. in the parking lot of the of the Sunridge.

The Ford Foundation generously agreed to donate up to \$6,000 to the Shared Hope International Organization, \$25 for each test drive.

The goal was met and the full \$6,000 will be donated on behalf of our community.

The event was manned by volunteers from the Baker City Soroptimists and Gentry Ford with a variety of Ford cars and trucks available to drive. Sadly, no Mustangs were included in the event.

“We even had a young guy driving through hear of the event on the radio and stop in to take a test drive and contribute to the cause,” said Bloomer.

After the test drive “goodie bags” were given to each driver that contained items such as key chains from Joe Scott’s Premier Auto Body, sticky note pads, notebooks featuring Ford cars and trucks, lightbulbs and a buy-one-get-one-free coupon for Subway Restaurant. Also tucked in those bags were informational pamphlets about our own local domestic violence programs through MayDay, Inc. and a pamphlet on Shared Hope International, the largest organization that fights human trafficking.

The Shared Hope International organization was founded by Linda Smith, a former Washington state legislator who also served in Congress after being elected in 1994 until 1999.

Sheryl Blankenship of Soroptimists International became involved when her soon-to-be daughter-



Gina K. Swartz / The Baker County Press

Speaker Mike Stradley draws on a decades-long career to speak about human trafficking.



Gina K. Swartz / The Baker County Press

Behind the table, Carole Dyke of the Soroptimists volunteers to hand out goodie bags to people who signed up for the Drive-a-Thon.



Gina K. Swartz / The Baker County Press

Pat Custer of Ford stands with volunteer Sheryl Blankenship, who helped start this event.

in-law, who is very active toward this cause, “lit a fire under me. I didn’t even realize this was happening in the U.S. That shows how naive I was. I went to the Soroptimists and said, ‘Oh my word, average age in the U.S. is 13. We have got to help.’ Everyone just jumped in and said, ‘What can we do? Let’s get the word out.’”

Teaming up and providing the vehicles for the event was Gentry Ford of Baker City.

“I was telling him how much I wanted to help with human trafficking and he suggested this event to partner up with Gentry Ford,” said Blankenship.

Pat Custer, General Sales Manager said, “Child/human trafficking is the second most profitable crime next to drugs, worldwide. It’s atrocious. It’s not that they are going after adults. They are going after weak-minded young people. It’s everywhere. It’s not just a U.S. prob-

lem. It’s a Baker County problem. Whether it has happened or not the opportunity is there, and it probably has, we just don’t know it. The runaway that the parents have given up could very well be a child prostitute somewhere right now. We’re not going to stop it or put an end to it but if we can put a dent in it at all that’s why we’re out here.”

Blankenship added, “The whole purpose it to bring awareness. The Soroptimists raised money to pay his (Stradley) way here, I handed him a check and he handed it right back and said, ‘I want this to go toward the cause.’ I thought that was just awesome.”

Sumpter Junction provided lunch for all of the volunteers of the event.

If you know of anyone who could be helped by this organization please call 1-888-HER-LIFE.

More information can also be obtained at www.sharedhope.org.

Election results

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For the Malheur County ESD Director at Large position, John McDonough received 46 votes with 2 write-ins against him. David Westerberg received 44 votes with 2 write-ins for other candidates for Director, Zone 4.

For Director, Zone 6 of the Intermountain ESD, Dale Bingham received 2,720 votes with 23 write-ins for others. Joe McElligott received 2,327 for Director, Zone 7 and there were 17 write-ins.

For Burnt River School District 30J, Director Position 4, Scott Swindelhurst received 74 votes and there were 4 write-ins. For Position 5, Waynette Morin received 81 votes with 4 write-ins.

For the Huntington School District 16J, no candidate filed for Position 3 so the 15 write-in votes will tell the tale, but for Position 5, Maxine Murray received 60 votes with 2 write-ins against.

Pine-Eagle School District 61, Director, Zone 1 saw Becky Kaaen with 190 votes, Kim Stutzman-Rowan with 244 and 3 write-ins. Zone 2 Heather Farley earned 405 votes with 2 write-ins. For 5, John Miniarch received 316 votes with 48 write-ins against. For Zone 6, Michelle Butner got 425 votes with 7 write-ins for others. For Zone 7, Mark Butler received 380 votes with 10 write-ins for others.

For North Powder District 8J, Director Position 3, Ross Fritz defeated Drew Martin 17 to 36. For Position 4, Larry Wogman received 35 votes to Jason Williams’ 18. For Position 5, Janis Hill received 27 votes and Justin Bingham received 26.

For the Baker County Library District Position 4, Gary Dielman ran unopposed and received 2,327 votes with 146 write-in votes cast for other candidates. For Position 5, Nellie Forrester also ran unopposed and received 2,592 votes with 24 write-ins cast for others.

For Director at Large, Baker Fire Protection District, Sony Vela had 242, Collin Kaseberg 290 and Alan Mel-lott 299 votes. Three positions were open.

For Director at Large, Pine Valley RFPD, Roger Gulick received 248 votes, Kenneth Wheeler 228 and Barry DelCurto 242 for each of their positions.

For Medical Springs RFPD, Position 2, Jerry Baxter received 18 and Valerie Tachenko 16 for Position 4 with 2 write-ins.

For the Powder River RFPD Steve DeFord got 42 votes for Zone 1 and Steve Boles 45 for Zone 3.

For the Eagle Valley RFPD, Steve Sharp defeated Robert Sharp 133 to 52 for Position 1. For Position 2, Ed Bowmen received 167 with 2 write-ins. For Position 3, David Simpson received 155 with 1 write-in. For Position 5, Ralph Graven received 162 with 3 write-ins.

In the Keating RFD Position 2, Perry Jacobs received 43 votes. In Position 4, Mike Miller also received 43. For Position 5, Mike Cook got 42.

In the Haines RFPD, Position 2 election, Ken Benson received 201 votes. Position 3, Connie Colton received 198. Dan Hansen got 180 for Position 5.

For the Greater Bowen Valley RFPD, Penny Devlin received 61 votes for Position 2, Steve Ritch 63 for Position 4 and Janet Jensen 62 for Position 5.

In the Powder Valley RFPD election, Jay Browne received 46 votes with 1 write-in for Position 1. No candidate filed for Position 2, but there were 7 write-ins. Colby Thompson received 42 votes in Position 4.

For Unity Community Hall Recreation District, Dave Ross received 51 votes. There was 1 write-in. No candidate filed for the second or third opening and there were 18 write-in votes for one and 8 for the other.

For Hereford Community Hall Recreation District, no candidate for filed for any of the positions, but the openings had 27, 25, and 24 write-ins.

For Director, Position 1, Powder Valley Water Control District, four openings were available. Jerry Gray received 189, Alan Maxwell 196, Thomas Pierce 180 and Jay Browne 184. There were a total of 9 write-ins.

Time Heater received 71 votes for West Eagle Water Control District Director at Large. Tom Smit received 61 and Dan Forsea 71. There were three positions.

For the New Bridge Water Supply District, Mary Hickox took one position with 9 votes, Don Flowers took one with 6, Peg Coffin the third position with 7 and Ben Becktold the last position with 5.

For the Pine Eagle Health District, Linda Collier, Loren Goracke, and Julie Stromer were elected with 253, 229, and 243 votes respectively.

Jim Aldrich was elected to the Haines Cemetery Board with 217 votes as was Steve Proebstel with 200.

There were 61 write-ins and no candidates for the Eagle Valley Cemetery position.

The Pine Valley Cemetery District position of Director at Large was filled by Janet Oliver with 270 votes and 2 write-ins.

Tim Wallender and Christina Wood were elected to the Blue Mountain Translator District Board with 366 and 393 votes. The third slot will be determined by the write-in votes.

Directors at Large for the Durkee Community Building Preservation District are Dick D’Ewart with 33 and Wes Proutly with 28 votes.

According to County Clerk, Cindy Carpenter, the names of the 359 write-in votes were scheduled to be counted on Thursday, with results coming in after this issue goes to press.

Carpenter said, “Then we still have 20 Challenged signatures and approximately five ballots that were dropped at other counties to count if received or updated within 14 days. The abstracts would be certified at that point and the districts notified. June 2nd is the 14-day mark. Then the district notifies the qualified write-ins to fill the position. They do not have to accept. So it is going to be a few weeks before any names can be released.”

Notice to readers: Because of the way our print schedule lands each year for Memorial Day, we are running our greetings for the holiday today, the Friday before, and will follow up next Friday with an array of Memorial Day coverage much as we did last year. We are thankful for all our men and women in the military, and their families. We remember those who were lost.