

# Local

## Blue Yesterdays: big band sound for local music scene

• **BAND CELEBRATES 35 YEARS, SET TO PLAY AT BANDSTAND DEDICATION**

BY BRIAN ADDISON  
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Baker City's own, the Blue Yesterdays big band, has reconvened to continue what has become a 35-year legacy of keeping the Swing Era alive. The Blue Yesterdays performs many of the hits from the big band era paying homage to American musical greats like Glenn Miller, Count Basie, Duke Ellington, and Tommy Dorsey.

The band rehearses every Tuesday evening and familiar melodies and harmonies ring out from saxophones, trombones and trumpets all held together by a four-piece rhythm section with piano, guitar, bass, and drums. In all, the band includes 17 musicians most of whom reside in Baker City with a few traveling from Union County.

The Blue Yesterdays, named long ago through a "name the band contest" won by LaDonna Uttenruether, was formed through a labor of love by current tenor sax player Doug Smurthwaite, now deceased and greatly missed baritone saxophonist Jim Monroe, and the late trumpeter and Baker High School band teacher John Swinkles. The band still plays many of the charts transcribed by hand by Swinkles.

Over the years, the Blue Yesterdays have provided a home for many great musicians and some who just loved being involved with a musical ensemble. Some who've lent their musical talents to the band include the late great pianist Dr. Gaylord Ward, the band's first bassist Jimmy Lloyd Rea, trombonists Kerry Carpenter and JD Lethlean, and trumpeter Harold "Spider" Webb. Many others



Brian Addison / The Baker County Press

The Blue Yesterdays big band saxophone section works through a recent rehearsal. From left are Cody Gyllenburg, Vivian Rhodes, Russ Hunt, and band founder Doug Smurthwaite. In the background are Jace Roland and Zach Allen.

have participated and their contributions are kept alive as the current members are often reminded of those who preceded them.

The current incarnation of the Blue Yesterdays has brought together some of the most talented musicians in the band's history. The trumpet section is led by Zach Allen with help from Brian Watt, the saxophone section comes together under the leadership of alto saxophonist and one of the original band members Russ Hunt, alto saxophonist and clarinetist Vivian Rhodes, tenor saxophonist and founder of the band Doug Smurthwaite with Eastern Oregon University professor Donna Evans on second tenor, and trombone section with Brian Addison, retired La Grande high school band instructor James Howell, Baker High School band instructor Jeff Sizer who has recently accepted a job offer teaching elementary band students in Pasco, Washington, bassist and owner of the Zephyr coffee shop and café Paul McNeil, guitarist Fredric Anderson, and from Cove drummer Carol Cromwell.

The Blue Yesterdays has

also provided a place for student musicians home from college on summer break to play and to maintain their chops. This summer cool jazz tenor saxophonist Cody Gyllenburg, talented trombonist Jace Roland, and recent Baker High School graduate the versatile woodwind specialist Gracie Hardy all performed with the band.

The Blue Yesterdays performed this summer for the July 12th Powder River Music Review in front of an enthusiast and supportive audience at the Geiser-Pollman City Park. That was the weekend Baker City saw record-setting rainfall and the band was just able to fit in one-hour-and-forty minutes of their two-hour program. Ironically, it was not long after the band performed a version of "Here's that Rainy Day Again," that the skies opened up again and sent band and audience looking for cover.

The Blue Yesterdays plan several more gigs in the near future including the upcoming and much-anticipated bandstand dedication in Geiser-Pollman City Park, and an upcoming Friday night dance

at the VFW. The date of the bandstand dedication ceremony concert has not yet been set and awaits word from the construction contractor as to the date of completion on the large acoustic structure but will likely take place sometime in the first part of September. The date of the dance at the VFW has not yet been set but will probably come together on a Friday evening in mid-October.

The recent decision by Jeff Sizer to accept a job in Pasco, Washington has left the band with a need for a jazz pianist and the band would like to invite another swing drummer to share the book with Cromwell. Trumpeters and a baritone saxophonist are also welcome to stop in for a rehearsal held every Tuesday evening in the Baker High School band room at 7 p.m. to 9 p.m.

The Blue Yesterdays band members extend thanks and appreciation to the Baker School District for allowing the use of the band room for rehearsals, the Baker County Cultural Coalition for funding assistance, and the support of a dedicated audience.

## League of Oregon Cities meets in Seneca

• **HUNTINGTON, SUMPTER COMMUNITIES REPRESENTED AT QUARTERLY MEETING**

BY EILEEN DRIVER  
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The League of Oregon Cities (LOC) quarterly meeting of the Small Cities Forum was held from 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. on Thursday July 16th at the Seneca School House at 101 Park Ave, Seneca, Oregon.

A representative from the Huntington City Council attended, as well as several individuals from the Sumpter City Council.

The meeting was called to order by Josh Walker, City Manager/Recorder of the City of Seneca who said, "I want to thank everyone for making the long trip out to Seneca to participate in this Forum. It has been a big help to us to have this group to learn from and discuss things with."

The first item on the agenda was Professor Sheri Carpenter, Business Marketing, Eastern Oregon University with a presentation of "Internships and Career Pathways in Rural Communities," which addressed the changes in the new economy where education and tech skills are the new currency. Going straight to a four year university is not necessarily the way to go anymore. Internships are valuable tools for both the student and the businesses and communities they serve. Students need to learn the "soft skills," collaboration, communication, critical thinking, persistence, professionalism and time management. Skills that are better learned with "on the job" training through internships working directly in their field of study.

The students benefit through experience, the business or communities benefit by getting work done by low or no-cost workers.

Anyone looking for more information can contact Shari Carpenter, PH.D, MBA at [scarpent@eou.edu](mailto:scarpent@eou.edu) or by going to their website at [www.eou.edu](http://www.eou.edu).

Stan Foster president of PARC Resources spoke to the assembly on "creating Fundable Proposals With Confidence" outlining the steps for successful grant proposals by establishing needs and priorities, researching funding opportunities, getting to know the inner workings of a competitive grant proposal, working out a budget, which is the "brain of a proposal," perfecting the narrative, which is the "heart" of a grant proposal and submitting the proposal, which is the "finish line."

According to Stan Foster, "Grants can be intimidating, but by taking them step by step they can be very successful and rewarding." PARC, which is short for Public Affairs Resource Company, Resources has more than 25 years of experience working with rural and tribal communities and can be reached at 800) 758-6812 or at their website [www.parcresources.com](http://www.parcresources.com).

The round table topics for discussion where the changes to the Oregon Marijuana laws, utility billing services and pricing and the current "cost of living" wage of \$13.00 an hour for individuals and \$16.25 an hour for families which is generally not being met by eastern Oregon citizens.

The Host city of Seneca supplied a delicious meal of Spaghetti with large organic beef meatballs, vegetable medley, green salad, foccacia bread and cookies or lemon bars for dessert.

Present to partake of the information and the food were LeAnne Woolf, Sumpter City Council; Annie Oakley, Sumpter City Council; Toni Thompson, President Sumpter City Council; Carrie Vessery, President Monument City Council; Ellen Lucas, Maintenance, Monument; Andrea Combs, Mayor, Seneca; Marsie Watson, Long Creek City Recorder; Sean Maloney, Project Lead ODOT Ontario; Brandon Maloney, Engineer at Anderson Perry; Robert Armbruster, Sumpter City Council; Melissa Findley, Mayor Sumpter; Tami Kowing, Mount Vernon City Recorder; Diane Blake, Canyon City City Council; Karen Wagner, Senator Merkley's office; Peggy Gray, John Day City Manager; Ron Lundbaum, Mayor John Day; Kathleen Cathey, Senator Wyden's Office; Eileen Driver, President Huntington City Council; Shellie Nash, Deputy City Recorder, Huntington; and Sean O'Day, General Counsel and Meeting facilitator for the League of Oregon Cities.

The next LOC Meeting was set for October 22, 2015 at Mount Vernon, Oregon and will be the last meeting of the year. Topics for the meeting will include zoning changes, Land Use laws and Ordinance Enforcement.

## SVRR celebrates No. 3 Heisler's 100th birthday

August is Founders' Month at Sumpter Valley Railroad! And on August 8-9 SVRR celebrates the 100th birthday of the No. 3 Heisler locomotive.

Special jaunts all weekend with cake at noon on Saturday at the Sumpter depot. Come join us in celebrating the Heisler's Century of Steam!

## Behind the summer's events

• **A LOOK AT THE RESOURCES BEHIND ALL THE SUMMER FUN**

BY KERRY MCQUISTEN  
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Baker City's busy summer events—like the Hells Canyon Motorcycle Rally and Miners Jubilee—seem to flow right by from an attendees' point of view.

But before, after and blended in during the events are a host of City and private resources working to keep the parade on its route and the beer garden safe.

Take, for example, the 275 orange barricade signs put up by City workers

from the Public Works Department to block off streets and mark the parade. That department also puts out four "advanced warning" signs, according to Tom Fisk. On Monday, Fisk and crew worked in reverse, picking up and taking down all the signage they'd dropped off days earlier.

Said Michelle Owen, the City's Public Works Director, "Our guys work very hard to make sure there is appropriate signage for each event. We want the public to stay safe. Our Parks Department also does a fair amount of prep work to get the park ready for Jubilee."

In additional interesting trivia, Baker Sanitary Service reports that the two dropboxes from the



Kerry McQuisten / The Baker County Press

Officer Rand Weaver helps mark the parade route last Saturday.

park alone during Jubilee contained 4,360 pounds of garbage—that's over two tons for one weekend, and doesn't count the additional temporary container, which isn't weighed.

Even the electrical setup for vendors in the park takes "an army of guys," according to Ron Bell, owner of Powder River Electric.

Bell has been volunteering at the park at Miners Jubilee each year for the

past decade, hooking up cords and electrical boxes. Bell says they "maxed out" on power in the heat of the day with the current vendor amount—using 400 amps, around 60 outlets and probably 500 yards of heavy duty bologna cords, if he had to guess.

In the past, Bell and crew have had to rent the "spider" boxes used. Not so this year.

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