

# Local

## Luminaria lighting set to music



Photo submitted by Larry Parker.

Larry Parker of Baker City tested out his new \$1,000 drone this year, using it to take pictures of the Relay for Life event from a bird's eye view.

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Smith says he doesn't technically charge for his bagpipe skills.

He said, "I just tell people to pay me what they think I'm worth. I accept donations. That's usually what I say. I've been paid as little as \$50 and as much as \$300."

Smith has played at funerals, weddings, parades, banquets—and most recently for the Idaho Department of Corrections Honor Guard.

"I suppose my love for bagpipes is directly connected to my Scottish Heritage, especially on my mother's side," Smith said. "When I was in high school, I saw *Braveheart*, and that just reinforced my pride! I knew that I would play pipes someday when I heard bagpipes up close and personal at a Renaissance festival in Tennessee. But I could never afford them until recently. A decent set of pipes, a bag, reeds, and maintenance items will run you \$1,500 easily!"

Smith says he's proud of his heritage—a direct descendant of William Kinney, a Scottish emigrant and Revolutionary War hero who, as the story goes, fired the first shot

at the Battle of Cuilford Courthouse, killing a British sentry.

In addition to the inspiration brought by his heritage, Smith grew up a "metalhead," which he thinks just might have influenced his love of nice, loud music.

Smith is entirely self-taught, beginning with a set of McCallum bagpipes from Scotland and a few Youtube tutorial videos.

"Since there was no one in Baker City to teach me, I did what any sensible person would do when they want to learn something. I went to Youtube!" he said.

He also praises his wife, Rebecca, for her patience.

"I have to say that my wife has been a saint in supporting me playing. She wasn't always wild about me practicing around the house. When you start playing the pipes, it never sounds good at first! But she knew it was a passion of mine, and she continues to support me. I think she sees the good that it brings to others. You don't see bagpipes around here often, and people really seem to enjoy them when they're around."

The Smiths are parents to four wee lads and lasses: Jordan, 10; Eowyn, 8;



Kerry McQuisten / The Baker County Press

A selfie with the piper was one of the scavenger hunt items prior to the lighting ceremony.

Henry, 6; and Juliet, 3 who have grown up around the sound of the bagpipes at home.

When he first started to play in 2006, Smith said, "I struggled for a real long time trying to learn how to tune them correctly—bagpipes consist of four reeds that need to stay stable."

Three years of practice went by before Smith was invited to that first Relay for Life ceremony.

"For a while, I felt I would never finally learn how to hold a consistent note. But as my strength progressed, so did my confidence, and I began playing in front of people," he said.

"It's something I've had to work at for a while with very little help from anyone. In a way, it's like appreciating money that you've had to work really hard for. Since I've had more of a struggle learning to play because of limited resources, my playing and my instrument have become more of a part of me, and I appreciate my talent a lot more than a would have otherwise. In a way, it's a blessing in disguise," said Smith.

Those interested in asking Smith to play at an event can reach him at jaybirdsmith9@gmail.com.

## Nelsons celebrate 50th anniversary



Submitted Photo.

Kent and Anita Nelson, formerly of Hereford, currently of Baker City, celebrated 50 years together with friends and family last weekend.

BY ROBERTA MORIN  
News@TheBakerCountyPress.com

Saturday, August 1 over 170 people enjoyed the big day for Kent and Anita Nelson's 50th wedding anniversary at the Senior Center in Baker City.

The event was prepared by their sons, Matt Nelson and Mark Nelson, and families with refreshments catered.

Matt emceed the event telling about life on the ranch while growing up.

He related how his parents involved them in roping and riding horses and even some rodeo events; they always came to cheer them on.

Mark shared his thoughts of growing up on the ranch and his appreciation for the loving Christian family.

Their community and church involvement was shared by the Nazarene Church pastor who also offered the blessing for the food following the sharing time.

Music selections were played on the piano by grandchildren Emilie and Edouard Nelson.

Guests were invited to relate interesting fun events throughout the years.

Gary Collison told about hunting trips at the ranch but more outstanding was a hunting trip to British Columbia where Kent took his own saddle.

Kelton Spain told horse stories, which drew many laughs.

Roberta Morin shared about teaching with Anita and being in plays with Anita's directorship of the "Burnt River Theatre Guild." These melodramas were a community highlight with many local participants. Morin also shared how Suski from Finland came to share their home as an exchange student. At that time, Morin was an Area Representative for the exchange student program.

All of Anita's siblings were there with the exception of her deceased brother Dwight.

Kent's twin, Karen, was also in attendance, and shared events with everyone. Since Kent was first born, he developed into the boss and even had Karen pulling him in the wagon when they were little.

Mark said, "It was a fantastic party and really cool. Seeing a lot of neighbors who had moved away, classmates and Suski and her family really made the day."

Matt and his children will remain here for a five-week vacation before returning home to London.

## Three wildfires ignite near I-84

Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Vale District resources responded to three wildfires of Interstate-84, the largest threatening Huntington, putting the city in a level one evacuation alert.

The fires were reported Wednesday around noon.

The largest of the three is the Lime Hill Fire, located just west of I-84 at mile marker 344 was over 7,000 acres at the time this article went to print.

There were 18 engines on site, along with three water tenders, three bulldozers and one Type Two Initial Attack crew. 10 air resources were also on scene including five Single Engine Air Tankers (SEATs), one heavy air tanker and four helicopters. Downed power lines and damaged utility poles were also been spotted and assessed by Idaho Power Company.

The Lime Hill Fire is also in Priority Sage-grouse habitat.

There is no estimate as to when the Lime Hill Fire will be contained.

The Alder Creek Fire is estimated at two acres. It is also located to the west of I-84 near mile marker 322, between the Pleasant Valley and Durkee exits. There are currently two engines on scene, from both the U.S. Forest Service and the Vale District BLM.

The smallest of the three fires was the Johnson Area Fire. It was one acre in size and is also to the west of I-84 near mile marker 324.

The Johnson Area Fire is actually a complex of three fires which has grown into a single fire. There are currently resources on scene from the Vale BLM, the Oregon Department of Transportation, the Baker City Fire Department and the Oregon Department of Forestry.

Due to their size, both the Alder Creek and Johnson Area Fires were contained soon. Still, weather and varying conditions could increase the potential for the fires to spread.

The freeway was shut down both directions all Wednesday afternoon



Submitted by Chris Dixon.

The fire near Lime burned over 7000 acres within just a day on Wednesday, shutting down the freeway in both directions.

between La Grande and Ontario due to the fires, reopening late that night.

No cause has yet been determined for any of the three fires.

Vale District BLM fire

investigators are currently investigating possible causes.

Report any wildfires or suspicious smoke to the Vale BLM Dispatch Center at 541-473-6218.

## Goal hit for Turbo's replacement

A new drug-detecting canine is one step closer to purchase.

Monday the Baker City Police Department received a \$1,000 donation from the Broncs and Bulls organization and a \$1,000 donation from Shawna Patton, pushing them over the \$10,000 goal toward purchasing a replacement drug-sniffing dog, said Chief Wyn Lohner.

Two weeks ago, the Sunridge Inn/Best Western in Baker City donated a check for \$3,000 to the cause.

"The owners have been so supportive," Lohner said at the time. "The Sunridge also donated back when we originally got Turbo."

The Baker City Police Department had previously received \$400 from High Desert Harleys. Other donors included the Hells Canyon Motorcycle Rally at over \$3,000, Lavish Salon and Day Spa, Chelsea C. Blatchford-Brown Road Photography, La Enterprises, Inc. -Unity, Oregon, Superior Towing, Murrit and Lorry Davis, Richard Johnson, Kimberly Ham, and P&E Distributing.

Turbo, the department's first drug dog, retired about a month ago at 10-years-old due to the passing of measure 91 legalizing marijuana.

Lohner says the department isn't looking to purchase just any dog. The \$10,000 pays for a canine with highly specialized training, equally specialized training for the new drug dog's office -handler, airfare transporting the dog here, and other associated expenses.