

Local

What it's like to be a ...

Baker City Police Chief

With college students choosing majors and high school students deciding between college or the workforce, this series will highlight one career path each week in August and September.

This week, we introduce you to Wyn Lohner, Police Chief for the Baker City Police Department.

BY KERRY McQUISTEN
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The BCP: Could you tell us a little about your background?

Chief Lohner: Well, I had a grandfather who was LAPD for 27 years, so that was my first familial exposure to law enforcement, where my interest started. I went on to get a degree in criminal justice. I also spent three years as a reserve—a reserve officer with the Springfield Police Department, then moved to central Oregon where I spent a lot of years working in the wood products industry, primarily managing a company that produced custom furniture. I was in management at 20 or 21 years-old after about six months, and I had a steep learning curve. I made a lot of mistakes back then, but I learned.

In the late 90s, a friend in law enforcement from Arizona told me about an opening that had come up here in Baker City, and I eventually became a patrol officer for three years here. Then I was promoted to sergeant for a year and a half. I spent two years in a lieutenant position, then in what was called the commander position here. In May of 2006, the City Manager told me I was interim chief after the departure of the last chief. That August I was sworn in as Chief, so it has been nine years now for me in this position.

The BCP: What special skills and training does one need in order to be in law enforcement?

Chief Lohner: I think my exposure to being a supervisor in private industry gave me management skills that surpassed any other training.

You have to have customer service skills as a police chief. You have to have listening skills. You have to be able to communicate with all kinds of people from all walks of life, from the drug addict to the elderly woman in her 90s.

We will work around and see more mental illness these days—that seems to be compounded lately and we see it more.

As for training? As an officer, you need to complete 84 hours of mandatory training every three years, including 24 of those in



Kerry McQuisten / The Baker County Press

Chief Wyn Lohner stands outside the police department with the Baker Tower and City Hall behind.

use of force. If you're in a supervisory position, you need 24 hours of leadership training.

The BCP: What's a typical day like for you? What happens when you get into the office?

Chief Lohner: I get into the office about a quarter to seven, and check the phone messages—for anything critical. I check the email in the morning. I try to sit in on the morning briefing between shifts to see what happened overnight, find any training points, and see what the day shift might have to follow up on.

Then the day really depends on what I'm doing. Some days, like if someone is out or on vacation or something, I might also stand in as chief, lieutenant and sergeant that day. Like today, I'm effectively all three. Every day is different and I can fill in as needed. Sometimes I'm the officer available to cover calls, or the second car on a call.

I think it's important that I know how to do and am able to do all the positions I supervise.

Working with the media isn't really that time-consuming of a part of my day. I do talk with someone from the media almost every day I'd say. That can be email, or the phone, or a mix. Then there is some paperwork.

Like right now we're at the end of that three-year training period I mentioned, so I'm trying to see where everyone here is with that—making sure everyone is keeping up with their training needs.

There are meetings like City Council and then other meetings that might deal with the community and community safety—like the motorcycle rally meeting we just had—that are about safety but not strictly having to do with law enforcement.

There's also the budget. As Chief, I'm responsible

for every single dollar spent in our department's budget, so I try to look at that and dial it down a little whenever I can.

Then there's making sure the supplies are adequate, vehicles are maintained—really it's all facets of the department. I line out stuff for staff, like at the front desk, to do here.

The BCP: How many people do you supervise?

Chief Lohner: When it comes down to it, everyone. Directly there would be two. Indirectly there are 15 sworn officers, three non-sworn positions, eight Reserve Officers and about a dozen other volunteers, including our Citizens on Patrol and Chaplains.

The BCP: What surprised you about your position?

Chief Lohner: Hmm. How much you have to try to have knowledge of everything that goes on in virtually every aspect of your department. Every patrol officer has the potential of needing to—they have the responsibility to make a life and death decision on any given day.

The BCP: What are your favorite and least favorite parts of the job?

Chief Lohner: My favorite? I'd have to say it's seeing the positive effects we can have in the community—those victories are frankly why we're in this business.

My least favorite? Although the political nature of the position has been very frustrating at times, the worst part would have to be the sorrow we see and deal with.

We typically see people in their worst moments. This can be the person who has gone through something and is to the point they're being arrested, to the victims, to a family at the time of a loved one's death.

You have to know how

to care for your officers as well, because different situations affect different officers in different ways. For one officer, a call responding to the drowning of a two-year-old might register lower, but to the officer with a two-year-old at home, that situation could put him over the top. I have to watch for that sort of thing, to look for it, and be able to help the officer find a way to deal with those situations.

We lost an officer here after the dog mauling that happened two years ago. Although it ended his career, he was actually fortunate. He has moved on in life and found happiness again. For many officers, those types of traumas destroy their lives forever.

The BCP: So are you able to leave the job at the office with you? Or do you carry it with you when you leave?

Chief Lohner: Yeah, I'm able to leave it here pretty well now, I think. There have been times... It's like I said before—we have to find ways of dealing with the stress more than most occupations. Law enforcement officers have twice the suicide rate compared to average so you have to find a way to handle things. For me it's the mountains, my faith, and exercise. It might be different for someone else.

The BCP: Parting thoughts?

Chief Lohner: One of the really neat things about law enforcement is it's constantly changing. You have to stay up-to-date on case law, driving tactics, shooting techniques—it's constantly evolving.

Hopefully when I'm done with all this, people will remember that I put the community first, and whether or not they always agreed with me, that I tried to act in the best interest of the community.

Local women start horse rehab and rescue effort



Sunny Werner / The Baker County Press

L-R: Jasmine Short, Ashley Perder, Kimberly Bullock and Alison Carpenter.

• NONPROFIT STATUS IN THE WORKS

BY SUNNY WERNER
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Many little girls dream of someday owning their own horse and, out here in Eastern Oregon, a large number of girls are able to realize that dream.

Unfortunately, not all horses have adoring young girls caring for them. Some are abandoned, some are living in poor conditions, some are abused, and many end up in kill pens where they will be euthanized.

Earlier this year, four local women decided to focus their energies on making a difference in the lives of as many of these horses as they could reach.

Alison Carpenter, Kimberly Bullock, Jasmine Shorts and Ashley Perder have pooled their resources and are in the process of setting up a nonprofit organization with the goal of rescuing and rehabilitating horses.

They have already begun the work, with two successful rescues to their credit. They have placed these horses in responsible homes, and are working on saving more.

"I've always had a passion for horses," said Bullock. "Right now we are just able to rescue, rehab and rehome one at a time, but our goal is to be able to work with many more."

Carpenter is the group's organization leader, with the responsibility of getting all necessary paperwork filed.

"We just received our EIN number," she said, "and we are working on our mission statement so we can apply for nonprofit status."

"Ashley is our 'do it all' person," said Bullock. "She is the one running to get hay, getting everything where it needs to be, our ranch hand."

Shorts is the group's "horse whisperer." "She can connect with the horses in an almost magical way," Carpenter explained. "She works with them until they relax and trust her, and then they can learn manners, and become adoptable."

The four women are all committed to their dream of a rescue facility, with stabling and exercise pens.

"With enough room," said Carpenter, "that we don't have to turn any horse away." Presently the group is paying for boarding for some of their rescues, but, as Bullock said, "That gets really expensive and limits what we can do to save others."

Equine Dreams has a Facebook page, and has set up a PayPal account for donations. Once they have their nonprofit status they will be able to give receipts for donations but, at present, those are not tax-deductible.

The women are in the process of reaching out to members of the community in the search for a strong Board of Directors, again, a requirement for nonprofit status.

When asked what their most pressing needs were, they were all in agreement: "We need space!" Additionally, they will need trucks and trailers.

"When we get a call about a horse in need," Shorts explained, "we only have one truck and trailer to use. If we needed to pick up more, there would be a delay, and that might put the horse in more danger."

They are planning to apply for grants to fund their rescue operation once they have their nonprofit status. "But we really want this to be a community project," explained Bullock. "We want people to know we are here and can help."

The group is determined that the horses they rescue go to ideal homes. "We will have an application process," said Carpenter, "and will be asking for references."

As they work toward refining their project, the women want to get the word out to the community that there is help available and also that donations will be gratefully received.

Hay, wormer, equipment, vet services, tack and farrier services are just some of the necessities of running an animal rescue operation.

Balancing the demands of family and work along with meeting the needs of the rescued horses is a juggling act in which all four women are supporting each other.

"We are committed to this project" said Bullock. "We will do whatever it takes to make it happen!"

Water boil advisory lifted for Unity

On Tuesday, August 25th, water samples for Unity were driven to Pendleton where they were tested by a certified lab. Public Health Officials received notice this week that all five of the tests came back with negative

results for E.Coli.

The boil water notice was issued for Unity on August 13 to protect the health of the public.

Residents within the City of Unity will no longer need to continue boiling water.

Baker County to booth at State Fair

Baker County will be represented at the Oregon State Fair's 150th Celebration.

The Fair will take place at the Oregon State Fairgrounds in Salem, Oregon, August 28 - September 7,

2015.

Attendance at the 11-day event was nearly 230,000 in 2014, with larger crowds expected this year. Those from Baker County who are traveling to the fair are encouraged to stop by.