

# Local

## Heart 'n Home director earns "Patriotic Employer" award

• VALERIE POTTER HONORED

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Ten co-workers mustered Wednesday morning, 9 a.m., at Heart 'n Home Hospice & Palliative Care, LLC, at 3370 10th Street, as Baker County Veteran Service Officer Rick Gloria, on behalf of Heart 'n Home Outreach Coordinator and Army Sergeant First Class Nathan Schultze, recognized Executive Director Valerie Potter as a Patriotic Employer, for supporting employee participation in the National Guard, and Reserve forces.

Gloria introduced himself to those present, including Potter, and informed Potter, to her surprise, that she was the guest of honor.

Gloria said, "We know that Nate, he is in the Oregon Army National Guard. He was active duty. He is the Medical Platoon Leader for the 3rd Battalion—big responsibility, and we know that just last year, the Battalion had the privilege to go to NTC, the National Training Center, and, you just don't show up at NTC. There's a lot of preparation that goes on with training, equipment—a lot. I've been there once, and, I tell you what, I'm glad I only did it once. They can keep Mojave Desert (where NTC for Armor Battalions is located)."

This was followed by laughter. Gloria continued, "That being said, let's go ahead, and, proceed. Valerie, today, we are here to recognize you, and, thank you, for extending your support to our veterans, especially Nate, your employee. My name is Rick Gloria. I am an ESGR, Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve representative, and, we are here today on behalf of Nate's request, to thank you for all support you have provided to our veterans, and, especially to him. ESGR understands that employer support to our veterans is crucial, and, extremely important. Our veterans are able to focus on their mission, knowing that they still have a job waiting for them, when they return home. And, when I'm talking about returning home, it could be for a weekend, it could be your two weeks of summer camp—yeah, they call it summer camp, but it's really hard training (prompting laughter). Or, it could be our one-year deployment overseas, to Iraq, or, Afghanistan, so, it's big having employers who support our veterans.



Todd Arriola / The Baker County Press

Valerie Potter receives her award from Rick Gloria (right) and Nathan Schultze (left).

"Sergeant First Class Nathaniel Schultze is the Medical Platoon Leader for 3rd Battalion, 116th Cavalry Brigade. In yearly training calendar 2015, the Battalion deployed to the Mojave Desert, the National Training Center, NTC, for Armor Battalions, where they conduct realistic training against top, opposing forces.

"As the Medical Platoon Leader, Nate has the responsibility to ensure that medical support is available, at a moment's notice, to support elements of the Battalion.

"In preparation for NTC, the Battalion geared up, with equipment, and, preparation for required training, two years prior. There is a lot of pressure on that Battalion to demonstrate that a National Guard Reserve unit can operate in a warfare scenario, operating with their assigned, M1A2 Abrams tanks. So, I'm going to stop right there, just mention a little bit about the Abrams tanks... They are the first National Guard unit to be issued the M1A2 SEP Abrams tank. And, guess what? This Gunnery Phase that happened at Gowen Field (in Boise, Idaho), there was a lot of oversight from 'Big Army.' There was so much brass coming in, and, out of there ... There were between four and five tank tables, and, the word I got from Brian (Lieutenant Colonel Brian Dean, Commander of the Battalion) was, 'You know what, we met, and, exceeded the expectations' ...

"Nate attended all scheduled scheduled drill weekends, along with two weeks supporting Gunnery Phases, at Gowen Field, Idaho. This was followed by deploying to the Mojave Desert, for nearly

a month.

"Nate states, 'I spent more time this summer with my Battalion than I did at my full-time job, with Heart 'n Home, and, I couldn't have done it without Valerie's support.'

"And, he further goes on to say, 'At work, her leadership is as outstanding as the best officers I have worked for. She mentors me, and, promotes self improvement. That "Speed of Trust" book she loaned me, and, other principles she taught me, were key in leading a medical platoon through NTC. My leadership skills continually improved, as a result of working with her.' Alright, Nate, this is your cue (as Schultze prepared to present the award)." Gloria read from the award:

"For your dedication to service and support of our veterans, the Office of the Secretary of Defense, Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve, recognizes Valerie Potter, Heart 'n Home, as a Patriotic Employer, for contributing to national security, and protecting liberty and freedom, by supporting Nate Schultze's participation in America's National Guard force, signed, Alex Baird, ESGR Executive Director, and, Paul E. Mock, ESGR National Chair.' Valerie, thank you for your support (followed by applause)."

Schultze said, "I just want to talk a little bit about what the impact of this was, because, I think, when I first mentioned that we had some additional requirements this year—it would be a little more difficult, and, longer than normal, and, that I would be gone for over six weeks in the summer—the initial reaction was shock, but then, it was immediately, 'Okay, it's our duty to

support this.' I was just so thankful to have that reaction. When we deployed to NTC, my medical team saw, of the 900 soldiers who were out there with us, over 700 training casualties, but, more importantly than that, we saw 225 or so real-world casualties. So, these were people who had heat injuries, or, non-battle injuries, and, sicknesses, and, training accidents. My platoon of medics—42 medics—were responsible for taking care of all the soldiers. So, that's when you support this one soldier, and, I was able to support my platoon better. That was the impact that it had. I was truly thankful for that. Even with the training scenarios, we did so well, that our died-of-wounds rate was six percent, which is the rate that a Special Forces regiment, or, a Ranger regiment would normally accomplish, not just the regular Armor unit, and, a regular platoon, who aren't Special Forces. The regular rate, I believe, is around fifteen percent (this was followed by applause). I couldn't have done it without Valerie, so thank you so much."

Potter said, "For us, that (the type of support of which Schultze speaks) comes from the top down. My leaders as well—supporting me, supporting them." Gloria said, "We're all in it together ..." Gloria spoke about the continuing need to reach out to veterans, around 2,000, throughout Baker County.

The Mission of Heart 'n Home Hospice & Palliative Care is the affirmation of "...life by providing emotional, physical, and spiritual support to our patients and to those who love and care for them," according to Heart 'n Home.

## NRAC meets

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The Baker County Natural Resource Advisory Committee (BCNRAC) met for its monthly meeting on Tuesday, February 23, 2016, at 3 p.m., in the Commission Chambers of the Baker County Courthouse, joined by guests Baker County Emergency Management Deputy Director Gary Timm, and local farmer and forestry expert Mac Kerns, for a wildfire and forestry discussion.

Present from the BCNRAC were Chair Doni Bruland, Baker County Commission Chair Bill Harvey, BCNRAC Coordinator Eric Wuntz, Alice Knapp, Lyle Defrees, Eileen Gyllenberg, Kody Justus, Cynthia Long, Chuck Chase, Maurene Chapman, Craig Ward, Jan Kerns, Lane Perry, Jake Bingham, Arvid Andersen, and Emily Braswell. Also attending were Wanda Ballard, and Dave McQuisten.

Bruland called the meeting to order, and, introductions were made of those present.

For the initial Public Participation, Ballard voiced her concerns about the comment period, 60 days, for the scope of the analysis (scoping period) regarding the Blue Mountains Forest Resiliency Project (it appeared on the Federal Register on February 5, 2016). The United States Forest Service (USFS) stated that a draft environmental impact statement (DEIS) is expected in the summer 2016, after which a 45-day comment period follows, and a final environmental impact statement (FEIS) is expected in December 2016, after which a 45-day objection period follows.

The minutes from the Tuesday, January 26, 2016 meeting were reviewed, and approved, with a motion from Defrees, and, a second from Long.

Harvey provided attendees with an update regarding coordination, including speaking about a letter recently sent from the County Board of Commissioners, addressed to Wallowa-Whitman Forest Service Forest Supervisor Tom Montoya, and (also sent to) United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Chief Tom Tidwell, USDA Region 6 Forester Jim Pena, and Wallowa-Whitman District Ranger Bill Gamble.

The letter began: "We, at Baker County, are now addressing the East Face project, of which we received a news release about this week. As we have pointed out to your agency many times, Baker County is a coordinating County and has been since 2001. We are again reminding you, as Wallowa-Whitman Forest Supervisor, that your agency has not lawfully engaged in the coordination process with Baker County. This is notification that with this project, East Face, you are in violation of the NFMA (National Forest Management Act) Act to coordinate with local governments."

The letter continues with statements regarding issues concerning the USFS's lack of government-to-government meetings, and coordination efforts with the County, as required by federal statutes.

Defrees introduced Mac, well-known to most of the committee, and, Mac began a discussion regarding issues with forestry management. Mac spoke about his background, including employment with the USFS, beginning in 1958. "No matter what you did, if you were able-bodied, you fought fire," he said. He talked about his experience regionally, and, nationally, having worked in different States, and, in different positions, including the management teams of three National Forests, and, as part of a Washington, D.C.-based team, which investigated the death of an Arkansas bulldozer operator, and, his co-worker, 30 years ago, prior to Mac's retiring.

Mac said, "Part of the big problem seems to be manpower to fight fires...We're waiting for crews, and, we're getting them all the way from New Zealand—that's kind of crazy." He said that able-bodied, local people are ready and willing to fight fires.

"Solving this problem takes a whole lot more than just the local people," Mac said, speaking about various agencies' involvement, and, obstacles. "The other problem we've got is, fuels buildup...You've got to remove that fuel, and, it's got to be a periodic thing..." He talked about the need to attack wildfires initially, and keep them small, and, he see issues with Forest Service management currently. "Right now, the Federal government is not a good neighbor ... It's not something that's going to be an easy fix ... All this country that big fires have burnt this year, was logged back in the 60s, and, 70s, and, it should have been reentered, probably, depending on the site, every 25 years. The stuff grows back. If you just wait for thickets, they're going to burn well. So, the plan has got to—depending on the site—you've got to go back in, and take care of that...To have a long-term solution to this, we have to get back into the business of timber sales ... It would go a long way to sure stopping the big fires," he said.

Chase voiced frustration with current management, stating that in the past, there was more of a focus on physically visiting sites, and, physical labor, if needed, whereas, today, he said decisions are made oftentimes solely from an office environment. "It's not that we can't train the people—it's the leadership quality," he said.

Timm said, "In 2003, I was hired to do a Homeland Security assessment for the County (Baker)... The goal of that was to reduce costs, and improve systems...We've tried to speak with one voice, whether it was Baker City Fire (Department), Baker Rural, Keating Fire, Forest Service, or, ODF (Oregon Department of Forestry)... I'm a firm believer in 'Every Acre Counts'..." He spoke about important components of a local plan, including the Community Wildfire Protection Plan: "Public education, training, planning, and response ..."

Ballard said, "This was a really great meeting ... I think we can all agree, last year was an exceptionally bad year (for wildfires). Hopefully, that won't happen again... We're victims of a past management, also ... I feel like change is coming, and, we can all do this."

## BHS, NP students get art awards

The "Eastern Oregon Regional High School Art Exhibition," featuring well over 300 works by students from 13 regional high schools, opened Friday, Feb. 19 in Nightingale Gallery at Eastern Oregon University.

EOU Provost Sarah Witte welcomed gallery visitors with opening remarks. Awards were presented

by Nightingale Gallery Director Cory Peeke, who congratulated the students and teachers who help make their participation possible.

The university's art program presented awards to exemplary works by students in grades nine through 12. All Best of Show winners received an award certificate, a \$50

Barnes & Noble gift card, a sketchbook, and an EOU T-shirt and lanyard. Honorable Mention recipients received a certificate of award.

Best of Show 12th Grade:  
Jessie Perkins (Baker City High) for her ceramic sculpture "Lizardman"  
Best of Show 9th Grade:  
Lindsey Slatter (North

Powder High School) for her mixed media piece "Hot Rod"

Honorable Mentions:  
Baker City High School Theodore Brown, 11th grade, for his oil painting "Ethiopian Child"  
Emily Carter, 10th grade, for her ceramic sculpture "Warrior"  
Alex Wells, 9th grade, for her photograph "Perched."