

Local

Easter Bunny visits Huntington Shooting



Eileen Driver / The Baker County Press

David Hanks and his daughter Carly.



Eileen Driver / The Baker County Press

L-R: Cole Waldrup, Gage Roby and Josie Larsen.

BY EILEEN DRIVER
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Early in the morning of Saturday, March 26, the Easter Bunny arrived in Huntington and left 180 beautifully decorated real Easter eggs and over 1,000 candy-filled plastic eggs hidden all over the lower field at Huntington Elementary School.

On that cool but sunny morning at 10:00 a.m. all the children in town, from barely walking to 10 years of age, gathered at the edge of the field with their

buckets and baskets in hand and stared in awe and wonder at the bounty before them.

At just the right moment they were let loose on that field and enthusiastically hunted down all the eggs that were hidden on the side of the hill, buried in large tufts of grass, cradled in small holes in the earth and hidden by rocks, while their parents, grandparents and friends watched and encouraged them from the sidelines.

The field was divided into three sections walking

to preschool, Kindergarten to 2nd grade and 3rd grade to 10 years of age.

Three lucky kids found special Easter eggs, which said “Grand Prize” on them.

They each were allowed to trade those Grand Prize eggs for a large Easter Basket full of goodies.

The lucky Hunters were Gage Roby for the preschool section, Cole Waldrup kindergartener hunting in the K2 section and Josie Larsen 3rd grader hunting in the 3rd through 10 years-old section.

All the children went

home with their baskets and buckets full of Easter Eggs and bright, shiny smiles on their faces.

The annual Easter Egg Hunt is organized by Sterling McKinney, 4th and 5th Grade Teacher at Huntington Elementary, with the help and assistance of many community members, the Huntington Historical Society and the generosity of the Huntington School District’s loan of the field, for the benefit of the children of the community.

BMCC small business services sees staff, offering changes

BY SUNNY WERNER
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Dr. Daniel Koopman, Director of Blue Mountain Community College (BMCC), Baker, said he is pleased with the ability BMCC has to offer local residents the opportunity to “earn their entire Associate of Arts Oregon Transfer degree (AAOT) while never leaving Baker City.”

This goal can be accomplished through face-to-face, streaming video and online courses.

Collaborative efforts between numerous community partners and BMCC allow more opportunities for students to gain knowledge and credits towards their degree or certification. The college has agreements with Robbins Farm Equipment (diesel technology), Behlen Country (welding certification), Baker City Fire Department (Basic Emergency Medical Technician certificate)

The BMCC Baker County Small Business Development Center (SBDC) works closely with county businesses and numerous

agencies to assist Baker County residents with small business proposals and short-term trainings in a variety of business related topics.

Jeff Nelson, current Senior Advisor at the SBDC, is very excited about some of the new directions and opportunities available to local residents.

In collaboration with Hatch Innovation, the Small Business Administration, and the Chamber of Commerce BMCC SBDC is currently working with five business people on a new approach to fundraising for capital to start their business.

“We are the first Center in Eastern Oregon to be able to offer this,” said Nelson. “I can’t tell you the names of the participants yet, as the State insists they must submit their proposals before their names can be released.”

The project that Nelson and the other Advisors, Phillip O’Reilly and Glenis Orcutt, are working on with the five participants will lead to a Community Public Offering.

This project allows the

small business owners to sell shares of the businesses to Oregonians wishing to invest directly in their local economy.

The shares average \$100, and will be sold as either an Equity Offering in which the shareholder is buying into the bricks and mortar, or a Debt Offering, which can raise capital at a lower rate than a traditional bank loan.

“Individual investors can only invest up to \$2,500 per business,” Nelson explained.

The cohort of business people with whom Nelson, Orcutt, and O’Reilly have been working is participating in a three-month workshop to put proposals together. Once completed, they will submit their paperwork to the State. Following that, they will be able to begin their public offerings.

“We have some much going on!” enthused Nelson. He went on to list the Pub Talks he and the staff will host in the community.

“April 20, at Lefty’s, we will have a talk called ‘Meet Our Team.’ We will have advisors and clients

who are participating in the current workshops. They will be able to present their proposals to the public.”

He added, “In May, here at SBDC, we will offer Economic Development, All Phases,” which will feature staff from Greg Smith’s office speaking on how this relates to Baker County.”

There will be more Pub Talks in the autumn.

Following up on work originally begun by Jake Jacobs, Nelson will be working next month with a group of prisoners at Powder River Correctional Facility, helping them develop business plans of their own.

He said, “We did this last year, and already have a couple of success stories. We have one of the graduates who completed his term working successfully building his own business in the community.”

This collaboration between prison and the SBDC was so successful, similar programs are being planned across the state.

The SBDC also offers a number of courses designed especially for businesspeople. These include a four-week tutorial on QuickBooks, one on how to utilize Social Media platforms for advertising, and another on how to use Google Maps to expose a business to the largest number of customers.

Nelson points out that the majority (75%) of his clients are women. He said that surprised him originally, as did the fact that many retired people had such an interest in the programs.

“A lot of the proposals are for a ‘second income’ kind of business,” he explained. “Many are online-based, not so much the bricks and mortar kind of businesses people have been interested in, in the past.”

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

But who was the victim? Or was there really one? Bonnie probably never knew for sure. Aumiller really didn’t either.

Bonnie told a story of her family members being uprooted from their Denver home after Schoeberlin, a known alcoholic, lost his job at the police department there. They ended up in La Grande living with a family member while Schoeberlin secured employment with the Baker City Police Department.

Aumiller transcribes Bonnie’s testimony as: “All I remember is him coming home telling us to hurry up and pack—this was like one o’clock in the morning, that we had to get out of there, because if this guy died, he’d go up for murder. Someone he’d shot on the job. Never heard any more about that.”

Bonnie describes fleeing for Denver in the middle of the night after her father had been employed in Baker City “three or four months.”

Knowing memories can sometimes prove faulty, Lohner set out for the basement at City Hall where he spent a couple hours digging through archived personnel files. He soon came across a “Personnel Questionnaire” showing one Cris Andrew Schoeberlin, a former patrolman of 14 years from Denver, Colorado, had begun employment with the Baker City Police Department on July 17, 1952, with then Chief of Police Fred Hunt as his immediate supervisor. While the spelling of Schoeberlin’s first name differed from the book, most of the other identifying details lined up precisely.

“So when I came across his personnel file,” said Lohner, “at least we had confirmation that Schoeberlin existed and had been employed here as claimed. The top of the questionnaire stated that he left without giving the City any notice, worked seven days, drew what the City owed him, and then left town.”

That timeframe, along with Schoeberlin taking the opportunity presumably during work hours to draw his pay, didn’t quite match Bonnie’s account.

So Lohner did some more legwork at the Baker County Public Library and came up with an article from the July 25, 1952 *Democrat Herald*. He’d hit pay dirt.

The article describes a shooting during which brothers Luke and Bob Smolich, ages 27 and 23 respectively, were shot by officers Schoeberlin and Dave Gray at the Royal Cafe that morning.

Hunt is reported as saying that Luke was shot by Gray as the two wrestled on the ground, and Bob was shot by Schoeberlin as he ran through that officer’s line of fire.

The article states, “All four were engaged in an altercation stemming from an earlier disagreement between the Smolichs and four other men.”

Hunt said the four had been accosted by the Smolichs as they sat having coffee. Local “golf pro” Julius Vanderwiele was knocked unconscious in the altercation.

When the two officers arrived, Bob knocked Schoeberlin into a block of meat in the kitchen area—hard enough to break the block. Luke charged at Gray, who pulled his gun—and then the shootings quickly occurred as described earlier.

Lohner took one last step in his research, contacting Lloyd Cook who had worked as an officer for the Baker City Police Department in the 1950s and served as Sheriff in Baker County for a brief time. Cook, now in his nineties and unavailable for an interview in time for print, spoke to Lohner last week.

“He didn’t recall Schoeberlin or that particular incident, but he remembered the Smolich brothers. According to his recollection, they were pretty bad news back in their day.”

The Smolichs eventually recovered from their wounds and were charged with assault and battery of a police officer, disorderly conduct and resisting arrest.

And then a surprise twist.

Lohner found a second article, this time dated August 1, 1952, just about one week after the shootings. According to that article, Hunt walked into City Hall, resigning from his position, citing “political issues.”

Two officers resigned with him. The first, Tom Muillenberg. The second, Cris Schoeberlin.

Muillenberg and Hunt remained on duty until August 15.

Schoeberlin left immediately.

Hunt’s resignation is documented as a conflict between himself and City Council. The reason behind Schoeberlin’s hasty departure is still largely unknown, but if the shooting Bonnie recalls was the Smolich shooting, which seems likely, there was no murder from which to run.

Bob Smolich was released from the hospital roughly two weeks after Schoeberlin’s return to Denver.

From there, Aumiller picks up the story again in his book. Once in Denver, Schoeberlin’s life took a turn for the better. With no further indication of drinking, Schoeberlin and his wife separated before her death.

“No longer trapped in a loveless marriage,” writes Aumiller, “he (Schoeberlin) returned to his former self—a kind and gentle man.”

According to Aumiller, Schoeberlin died in 1970 at the age of 62.

“Earth Angels” is available at Amazon.com.

Mining summit April 26

A free mining and aggregate summit will be held at the Baker County Events Center, 2600 East on April 26. The event is sponsored by the Oregon Mining Association, Oregon Concrete and Aggregate Producers Assoc., Oregonians in Action, Baker County Economic Development, and Eastern Oregon Mining Association. This will be an opportunity to meet and hear from people involved in the mining industry. The latest on the legislative front will be discussed and this will be an opportunity to find out what is going on in the industry.

Estate/Moving Sale

At: 1035 1st. Ave. So. Payette, Idaho ♦ 10 a.m. MDT
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