

# Local

## April is child abuse prevention month



Kailyn McQuisten / The Baker County Press

The first pinwheel garden appeared in front of the Baker County Courthouse last Friday.

April is Child Abuse Prevention Month, and Building Healthy Families, Baker County YMCA, Baker County Juvenile Department, CASA, GOBHI, and New Directions Northwest invite you to join them for the 1st annual Pinwheels for Prevention Campaign in Baker County.

As part of this campaign, a pinwheel garden will be planted on Friday, April 1st and will be displayed at four locations in Baker County throughout the month: Baker County Courthouse, New Direc-

tions Northwest Outpatient Office, Baker Middle School and Geiser Pollman Park.

The pinwheel is a happy, uplifting symbol of childhood and serves as a reminder of the healthy start we want for all children.

Hundreds of shining, colorful, spinning pinwheels make a beautiful sight, sure to put a smile on a child's face.

The pinwheels represent the great childhoods all children deserve, and are a symbol for child abuse prevention.

Everyone has a role

to play in preventing child abuse. You can get involved by making a donation or sponsoring a pinwheel. Please contact RaeAnn Butler of Building Healthy Families at (541) 398-1363 to learn more about how you can participate in the Pinwheels for Prevention Campaign.

The pinwheel cannot move on its own. Be the force that moves the pinwheel and bring about real change for children in Northeastern Oregon. It's your turn to make a difference for a child!

## City goal-setting

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John said, "You might find it a little shocking that we are not doing that."

Councilors around the room agreed with John that it was critical that someone calling in with a potential heart attack, for example, not be made to wait.

"People are waiting for service," John said. Adding another trained responder would be high on his wish list.

John also said he's finding himself personally responding to more and more calls, and even handling administrative duties such as writing out burn permits.

"We are the only department without an administrative assistant."

John said around 600 burn permits per year are issued from his department.

He said his department has already exceeded its overtime budget, and though utilizing County employee Gary Timm within the building had helped slow overtime use somewhat, that solution had not been enough.

John's stated goals included to increase community volunteerism, and to increase paid call staff in the coming year.

Another of his goals is to increase ambulance revenues. His department's current annual budget is \$1.6 million with ambulance-related revenue making up \$700K of that.

John is currently pursuing a transport primary response agreement with St. Alphonsus, which would lock in ambulance transport revenue for the City rather than face losing it should a private ambulance service move in to the area to compete.

He is also looking at grant potential for the Fire

Department.

### Economic Development.

Back as a topic of discussion after last month's City Council meeting was the current situation with the City/County economic development office headed by Greg Smith.

At present, Transient Lodging Tax (TLT) monies—98% coming from businesses existing within the Baker City limits according to Councilor Dan Lowe—go to fund that office. That leaves two-percent of the bill covered by TLT monies collected from businesses in other areas of the county.

Said Mayor Mosier, "Our message isn't we don't like what the County is doing. Our message is the City isn't getting done the things it needs to get done."

To that end, exploration of a Community Developer position funded by a possible portion of the City's TLT funds was discussed, as well as perhaps strengthening the City's presence on the Economic Development Council by adding more members to represent the City.

### Other Areas.

For community parks, so far the ideas tossed out as goals are to continue regular maintenance for local parks, play equipment and the Leo Adler pathway, as well as and continue to develop an action plan for Court Plaza, possibly finishing its connection to Central Park. A sustainability plan for the golf course was mentioned, as was increased utilization of Central Park.

Regarding administration and government, improving the Council Chambers' audio and visual system appeared to be a priority. Mayor Mosier stated that when people approached her at the grocery store,

they often mentioned problems hearing the meetings when they streamed the video online.

Promoting joint meetings with other entities, continued education opportunities for staff and council, identifying cost-saving areas, and adhering to a budget were also key points under that same category.

For water and wastewater, public relations and communications with the public regarding potential rate increases were mentioned, pursuing a backup groundwater source such as a well, establishing a rate structure that isn't a burden on residents, improved communication with the Department of Environmental Quality, and exploring monthly or electronic billing options were discussed.

Enhancing water security was high on the list of goal ideas.

Under the topic of "streets," the only real goal was to explore funding options to cover the \$6.9 million in street maintenance necessary in the future.

City Recorder Luke Yeaton mentioned Human Resources (HR) plans to update the HR practices handbook, have an HR audit conducted, and continue the City's Safety and Wellness program.

More discussions about the City's goals and goal-setting are pending, and a list of goals will be released to the public when finalized.

Many around the room joked that perhaps the goals should be labeled "Jim's Goals" as at present, Councilor Jim Thomas is the only one who has confirmed interest in running next time.

Members of the public are encouraged to contact City staff and Council members with ideas and feedback at any time.

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