

Local

Reserve officers graduate



Kerry McQuisten/The Baker County Press

Members of the 2016 graduating class were presented with their certificates as new reserve officers last Saturday.

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Lt. Dustin Newman presented certificates to the Baker City Police Department graduates, standing in for Chief Wyn Lohner who was traveling out of state. Lt. Warren Thompson presented in Sheriff Travis Ash's place, as he was also unable to attend. Chief Brian Harvey of the La Grande Police Department presented to the La Grande graduates. Chief Ray Rau of the Nyssa Police Department presented to the Nyssa graduates and served as the morning's keynote speaker. Union County Sheriff Boyd Rasmussen and the graduate with that agency were unable to attend.

Boyd explained in a combination of both his introductory speech and a prior press release that the Academy was founded in 2012 and has trained over 70 public safety personnel, primarily Reserve Officers and Deputies from three counties. The academy has also provided training to full-time officers, dispatchers, probation/parole officers, and fire Paramedics who serve on the Eastern Oregon Special Weapons and Tactics (SWAT) Team. Many graduates, he said, "have gone on to full-time, paid law enforcement positions but a large number, by choice, continue to serve their communities in a volunteer capacity."

For the first time, an arrangement with Blue Mountain Community College's Baker City campus means that academy graduates are eligible to earn up to six college credits upon completion of their training.

Graduates complete over

200 hours of training in order to earn their certificates, with hundreds more hours ahead.

Boyd took a moment to point out Deputy Rich Kirby who continued to train the reserves perhaps above and beyond the call, despite a serious condition that required surgery.

"It would be difficult to find anybody better than the recruits who went through this course," Boyd said. He also emphasized the support of the various agencies as key to the program's success.

Rau then took the podium to deliver the keynote address. Police Chief at Nyssa since 2012, Rau grew up seven miles outside Elgin. A Desert Storm veteran, he has served in law enforcement since 1995.

"I have been blessed," Rau began to the graduates. "I sat where you are many, many years ago."

Rau emphasized that the new reserves never forget their "servant mentality." He paused. "Don't ever forget that."

Rau went on to quote, "If service is below you, then leadership is beyond you."

He addressed the fact that reserve officers can double the police force in many agencies, but as volunteers, are not paid.

The front of the program for the ceremony summed up that idea: "Reserves do for free what most would not do for a million dollars."

Rau spoke to the sheep-dog analogy made so famous in the movie, "American Sniper."

He stated that law enforcement officers view honest, law-abiding citizens as their flock, which they are sworn to protect from the "wolves."

"I've been hunting

wolves for a very long time," he said.

Rau clarified that 97% of those with whom his officers deal are typically just normal people who have made poor judgment calls. Three percent, he said, would fall into the "wolf" category—sociopaths, psychopaths and the like, who want to cause harm to others.

Rau concluded his presentation with a series of video clips and media snippets showing everyday encounters his officers have faced.

He encouraged the graduates to hold onto the "feel-good moments" in their careers, as by contrast due to the nature of their jobs, they will encounter so many difficult ones.

Student speakers were Officer Cassie Heine of the La Grande Police Department and Deputy Mike Dunn of the Baker County Sheriff's Office.

Dunn highlighted the desires of the graduates to serve and protect their communities. He also spoke to several of the classes he had completed in the Academy—everything from professionalism and ethics, to defensive tactics, to traffic stops.

"There's no such thing as a routine traffic stop," he said he'd learned.

Dunn also touched upon building searches, emergency vehicle operation and firearms safety.

Heine, who is also a 911 Dispatcher urged those in the room to "pursue your career with vigor and enthusiasm."

She recited the Police Officer's Prayer, and spoke to the law enforcement code of ethics, which includes among many other things to serve mankind, safeguard lives and property,

protect the innocent against deception, and to respect the Constitutional rights of all men to liberty, equality and justice.

"Law enforcement is not a job," she concluded. "It's a calling."

Thompson and Harvey spoke briefly.

Thompson called the reserves the "backbone" of their respective agencies.

Harvey noted, "You're on your way to the most incredible career you could ever ask to serve in, so do it well."

This year's graduates, listed alphabetically by agency (also alphabetically) are:

Baker City Police Department

- Tina Aldrich
- Jacob Hobbs
- Cody Kirby
- Dan Koopman
- Zach Thatcher

Baker County Sheriffs Office

- Talon Colton
- Mike Dunn
- Chad Mills
- Joel Teixeira

La Grande Police Department

- Bailey Blagg
- Cassie Heine
- Austin Henry
- Tesmond Hurd

Nyssa Police Department

- Greg Bunker
- Joshua Hardy
- Eric Menchaca
- Colin Peterson

Union County Sheriffs Office

- Nicholas Vora

Everyone in uniform stood to reiterate their oaths, repeating the law enforcement code of ethics in unison near the end of the ceremony.

For more information on the academy, contact Boyd at jboyd@bakercity.com.

Teens save life

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Slobig said she had to drive across the concrete island in the middle of Campbell to get her own vehicle out of the street.

"It was crazy," Palmer said. "We just flew over there." Palmer said she isn't sure why they felt the need to drive toward the scene, but they immediately did.

"When we saw he'd fallen to the ground," Slobig said. "At first I thought he must be joking."

"It sounds awful, but at first I thought he was faking it," said Palmer. "He sat down and then just fell back."

The driver of that semi, Jerry Jewell, age 58 from Ft. Lauderdale, Florida, wasn't faking it after all. In fact, he had just had a massive heart attack. "He was purple," Slobig noted.

Palmer sprang to action, reaching Jewell first, where she began and continued doing chest compressions until she was tired. Jewell's friend, Hubert Wayne Simmons, who had been a passenger in the semi, looked on and asked for help.

Palmer said, "He was blue and purple. We kept checking for his pulse but didn't get a response. I wasn't sure if he was alive. We just kept going. I think it must have been 15 minutes."

"Then Sydney switched to mouth to mouth," said Slobig, who then took over the compressions.

The two girls continued to perform CPR until the ambulance arrived and first responders took over, using a defibrillator almost immediately.

"We didn't even hear when they arrived," said Slobig. "It felt like a long time. It was all very emotional all around. They were going to take him to the hospital and getting ready to Lifeflight him to Boise. We didn't even know if he'd made it. I remember climbing up into his truck trying to find his I.D."

Slobig said Officer Coletton Smith called and told her that Jewell wouldn't be alive if they hadn't applied their training, and that he didn't know how they'd done it considering so many times CPR fails.

Palmer said it was less than an hour before they received that call from Officer Smith.

What happened to the other man who was part of the argument that happened just prior to Jewell dropping to the ground? Police identified him as Scott Edward Fraser, age 33 of Baker City, by running the license plates on his vehicle.

"We had seen him drive off in a dark colored truck," said Palmer.

Police Chief Wyn Lohner said both men were reported as yelling at each other and pushing one another, but there's no documentation that either man struck the other.

Slobig believes Fraser was angry because Jewell's trailer, due to its length, had still been in the intersection when the traffic light turned red. She said at one point Fraser had accused him of "T-boning" his own vehicle. There was no evidence of a collision, however.

Fraser was later charged with disorderly conduct.

Jewell asked the girls to visit him at St. Alphonsus in Baker City before transport to Boise.

Jewell underwent open heart surgery in Boise on Tuesday afternoon at 1 p.m.

Palmer said Wednesday that she and Slobig had been down to Boise to visit Jewell. He was "doing okay," she said. However, Jewell didn't come out of surgery as smoothly as doctors had hoped, and was being closely monitored at the time this article went to print.

"We did get to meet his sister," Palmer added. "She has flown up from Florida to be with him, so that's good."

"Keep him in your thoughts," said Slobig.

Parallel Ensemble to perform at EOU

Eastern Oregon University's 45th Parallel Ensemble is performing at 7:30 p.m. Wednesday, June 1 in McKenzie Theater in Loso Hall.

Their repertoire includes a variety of music.

Admission to the concert is free with donations accepted to benefit the music program or music scholarships at EOU.

For more information call 541-962-3559.

Nonpartisan initiative

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Three weeks ago, Kate Rohner, Michelle Kaseberg and Mike Rudi completed the first step, obtaining a ballot title through the local District Attorney's Office. They've dubbed their political group, "Kick Politics out of Baker County's Business."

Because Oregon has always had a closed primary, Republican voters receive Republican ballots and Democrat voters receive Democrat ballots.

Rohner has stated that she believes only the voice

of one party is heard as a result.

"That's nonsense," counters Jones. "The local Democrats have just as much opportunity to find a viable candidate to run for any of these positions. They have repeatedly failed at a County level to produce an electable candidate. This leaves those who lean more to the left trying to find a dirty way to win. They can either reregister to Republican and hijack the Republican primary, or they can remove party affiliation and hide the true ideology of their candidates that way."

Rudi, who is registered as a nonaffiliated voter or NAV, is quoted in another media source as being displeased with having to re-register every primary in order to vote.

"This just shows the level of ignorance we're dealing with here," said Jones. "Under Oregon Statute, NAVs can just put in writing to the County Clerk which ballot they'd like to receive, and vote either way without registering. They've never been disenfranchised."

"They don't know the system at all, and yet they want to change it," said

Jones.

Jones also points out one nasty side-effect of changing Commissioner seats to nonpartisan. "If a commissioner resigns, under a nonpartisan system we lose the local representation (up to 48 precinct committee people) from all corners of Baker County in the nominee selection process."

"The decision would be left to just two remaining Commissioners or the Governor if two commissioners resign. Who would want Kate Brown deciding who our County Commissioner will be?"

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