



The Baker County Press

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ODOT meets with LEOs over variable speed limit

BY GINA K. SWARTZ
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By now, anyone who has travelled I-84 between Baker City and La Grande has noticed the new overhead electronic speed signs that were installed over the summer.

The signs are part of a Variable Speed Limit (VSL) project ODOT embarked on in an effort to reduce traffic crashes, the first of its kind in the

State of Oregon. The signs went live October 1, 2016, in test mode and the mild conditions the area has experienced have yet to trigger the signs to reduce speeds.

On Thursday November 17, 2016 ODOT facilitated a meeting bringing together Oregon State Police from both Baker and Union Counties, the Baker County Sheriff's Department, the Baker City Police Department,

Baker County Emergency Management and from Salem; Kristen Twenge, ODOT's Safety Division Law Enforcement and Judicial Programs Manager.

The meeting began with an explanation of the project by Ace Clark, ODOT District 13 manager. He began by explaining the area chosen.

There have been some questions by the public as to why an area that is relatively flat and understated

was chosen over areas such as Cabbage Hill, Meacham or Ladd Canyon as those areas experience adverse weather often.

The answer is relatively simple. The area of I-84 where the VSL project is in place, from mile post 227 (Clover Creek) to mile post 304 (Baker City), was designated as a "trouble" spot.

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Gina K. Swartz / The Baker County Press
Billie Jo Deal, Region 5 Traffic Safety Coordinator for ODOT with Kristin Twenge, also of ODOT.

VFW holds 5th Youth Shoot



Todd Arriola / The Baker County Press

This year's winners lined up for one final photo after the fifth annual VFW Youth Shoot, which boasts a number of volunteers and sponsors each year.

BY TODD ARRIOLA
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The fifth annual VFW (Veterans of Foreign Wars) Youth Shoot was held at the Veterans Memorial Club in Baker City on Saturday, November 19, 2016, bringing together 46 competitors and \$3,500 in total donations.

Bailee Griggs was crowned Top Shot, with six bullseyes, and the highest score of the group, 100, receiving the award of a Savage .17 HMR bolt-action rifle.

Registration for the shoot, at \$10 per competitor, was opened at 7 a.m. and closed at 11 a.m., followed by a pre-shoot safety meeting at 11:30 a.m. with retired Army First Sergeant Duncan Pierce reprising his role as instructor.

Throughout the .22 caliber rifle-themed event, safety was constantly emphasized, including the requirement of ear and eye protection, while in the area of the shooting range, located in the basement.

As in past years, shooters, ages 10-15, could use either their own, or one of the club's .22 rifles, with open sights, and a bolt, lever, or pump action (no semi-automatics).

Despite the decline in shooters—down from 70 last year, due to various factors, notably, other events in the area—many of the same volunteers united once again to make the event a successful one (43 competed two years ago, indicating a cyclical participation pattern).

The shoot took about three hours to complete.

Volunteer Alita Arendel once again helped organize and provide food for the event, including chili dogs and

other goodies, and other food and cash donors included the Haines Sell-Rite General Store, Safeway, D&J Tacos, Big Chiefs BBQ, El Erradero, Teresa's Treasures, Trader Ray's, Bi-Mart, and D&B.

Other volunteers included Danny Sword, of Sword's Lawn Care, Memorial Club bartender Karen Wilson, who emceed with Alan Elsberry, Corky Lien, Phil Erickson, Joe Brooks, Adam Brooks, Dave and Bev White, Wayne and Marilyn Bloom, Bill Hanley, Chad and Tracy Williams, Butch Boucher, Paul Russell, Phil Marton, Ray Berryman, Brian and Tiffany Jennings, and Bret Combs. Many of these volunteers acted as range coaches, one for each competitor.

With the competition finished, Elsberry and Wilson teamed up to announce and to award the winners. Wilson said, "I'd like to thank all of our sponsors, donors, and volunteers...We had a great crowd this year. Thank you so much..."

She introduced Elsberry, who said, "I want to thank all the volunteers tonight; they put in a lot of hours..." Elsberry announced the winners.

For age group 10-11, Maggie Stanbro placed first, with 99, and seven bullseyes; Connor Chaves placed second, with 99, and five bullseyes; Michael Gentry placed third, with 97, and four bullseyes; and Talon Hayden placed fourth, with 97, and four bullseyes (Gentry and Hayden competed in a shoot-off for positions).

SEE YOUTH SHOOT PAGE 7

Reason for dog deaths unknown

BY KERRY McQUISTEN
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Rumors have been flying around Baker City recently regarding a string of dog deaths within the City Limits. However, thus far it has been impossible to determine if the theory that the dogs were poisoned is correct—or in fact unfounded.

Barbara Sherman, whose four-year-old dog died recently under what she believes are mysterious circumstances, says she has heard of eight or nine such incidents around town. Her dog, she said, was healthy when she put him outside in her yard, but he died suddenly that evening.

Veterinarian Matt Kerns of the Animal Clinic on 10th Street said Monday that it is "really tough" to determine if an animal has been poisoned, particularly if the specific toxin is unknown. "There are so many it could be, that if we don't know what to test for, it's very difficult," he said. The amount of time passed before a veterinarian sees a potentially poisoned animal also affects the ability to determine the cause of death.

Lt. Dustin Newman of the Baker City Police Department said last Friday that to date, only one suspicious dog death case had been officially filed with that department.

SEE DOG DEATHS PAGE 5

Hand, foot and mouth virus hits Pine-Eagle

BY SUNNY WERNER
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Pine Eagle Charter School in Halfway sent an email to parents on Monday, November 21, warning that there is currently an outbreak of Hand, Foot and Mouth Disease.

School Secretary Angie Chetwood stated on Monday that three of the total 200 student body (Kindergarten through 12th Grade) were officially absent due to the disease.

According to the Mayo Clinic, "The most common cause of hand-foot-and-mouth disease is infection with the coxsackievirus A16. The coxsackievirus belongs to a group of viruses called nonpolio enteroviruses. Other types of enteroviruses sometimes cause hand-foot-and-mouth disease."

SEE VIRUS PAGE 5

Friday Cloudy with a 30% chance of rain/snow showers. Highs around 40. Lows below freezing at night.

Saturday Cloudy with a 30% chance of rain/snow showers. Highs around 40. Lows below freezing at night. Chance of precipitation 60% at night.

Sunday Cloudy with a 30% chance of rain/snow showers. Highs in the mid-30s. Lows below freezing at night, down to about 20 degrees.

Your weekend weather forecast for Baker County.



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