



# The Baker County Press

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## Snowbound calf rescued

• LUCKY THE CALF GETS AIRLIFTED OUT OF THE HIGH COUNTRY

BY TODD ARRIOLA  
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In late January, Baker Aircraft owners and operators Troy and Genevieve “Gen” Woydziak, among others, played a pivotal role in the rescue of rancher Mike Trindle’s newborn calf and two yearlings stuck in the Eagle Cap Mountains.

Troy said that Trindle, who has used Baker Aircraft’s services in the past to search for missing cattle, informed Woydziak that he was short several head in the North Minham River drainage area, and Woydziak told Trindle that the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) regularly asks Woydziak to fly in that area to conduct routine wolf presence checks.

On Saturday, January 21, 2017, Troy, while flying in the area on one of those checks, spotted one cow

and two yearling calves belonging to Trindle, recorded the GPS (Global Positioning System) coordinates, which he then relayed to Trindle, via text message. Troy said he also saw some buffalo, a familiar sight there, across the canyon from the cattle.

After Trindle received the message, he called Troy while he was still in the helicopter, the three-passenger, yellow and blue Robinson R-44 Raven II, with the tail number N1795J, and he asked Troy whether he could possibly assist with getting some

hay to the cattle. Troy said that he would try if there was time, and he returned to Enterprise, where he dropped off an ODFW passenger.

Troy attempted to return to Baker, and he said there was a snow storm in the Elgin area, which prompted him to fly back to Enterprise, where he said an ODFW agent then allowed him the use of the agent’s vehicle to drive back to Baker City.

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Submitted Photo.

Troy Woydziak of Baker Aircraft cradles little Lucky as they head for the rescue helicopter.

## Fighting for rural jobs



Kerry McQuisten / The Baker County Press

Clockwise from left: Kathleen Chaves, Richard Chaves, Rep. Greg Walden, and Walden staff member Nick from the congressman’s central Oregon office.

• CONGRESSMAN GREG WALDEN TOURS CHAVES CONSULTING

BY KERRY McQUISTEN  
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Last Friday morning from 8-9 a.m., U.S. Rep. Greg Walden visited the offices of Chaves Consulting on Dewey Avenue to learn more about recent events at the company that resulted in the loss of 54 local jobs.

The week before last, funding for those jobs was removed as Governor Kate Brown announced her intent to move those positions from the private sector in Baker City to the public sector in western Oregon. That decision meant that the Chaves’ \$2.5 million annual contract to operate an Oregon Health Plan (OHP/Medicaid) call center would not be renewed for the additional years that were possible per that agreement.

Last week, owners Richard and Kathleen Chaves were able to speak with Brown for 15 minutes via phone, and felt hopeful that as a result, their issue was at least on the radar.

After the couple gave Walden an overview of their operations, Walden asked, “So what happened here?”

“You know, initially we employed 54 people and at the start of the contract,” Richard explained, “they said we guarantee this for a year through the end of January 2017, but we’re putting in a clause in the contract for up to five,

one-year renewals because based on your performance and ongoing demand, the contract could be extended. So we operated from that perspective.”

Richard said that those positions came with full benefits and started well above minimum wage, and that the call center consistently met or exceeded all contract requirements.

“We out-performed the State call center,” Kathleen said. “There are over 300 people in there and we out-performed them by double.”

“Our average wait time is three minutes and something,” added Richard, “and theirs is 40-something minutes—up to four hours.”

Walden, as Chair of the Energy and Commerce Committee, of which Health is a subcommittee, is working on two bills at present to combat fraud in the area of Medicaid.

“We can help you with that,” Richard said.

“And that’s why we’re here,” Walden said. “We’re looking at how to control costs... Last year the Government Accountability Office reported \$36.3 billion in improper payments.”

Walden listened to more about the situation and then summarized, “You have a more efficient, less costly alternative that was providing better service—and is now going to be hijacked—and hire new people in Salem at double the cost.”

Those jobs—77 proposed to be added in Salem—would be union-represented positions.

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## Man arrested on sex abuse charges

On February 5, The Baker County Sheriff’s Office began investigating an alleged sex abuse case following a disclosure made by a young female victim.

The suspect in the case was identified as Joshua Dean Baker (DOB: 05-22-1977). Baker resided at 274 North Main Street in Halfway, Oregon.

Baker was interviewed on February 9 regarding the allegations and admitted to inappropriately touching the breasts and vaginal area of the minor child and corroborated several statements made by the child.

Baker was arrested and charged with Sex Abuse in the 1st Degree (two counts) and Unlawful Sexual Penetration in the First Degree. The Sheriff’s Office is still actively investigating the alleged crimes.



Photo courtesy of the Baker County Sheriff’s Office  
Joshua Baker.

## Cougars in South Baker?

BY KERRY McQUISTEN  
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Kristin and Nathan Neff live in South Baker, the back of their house against the field that stretches out behind the Agape Church on Highway 7—and they believe a pair of cougars may have visited on more than one occasion within the past two weeks.

In an interview on Tuesday, Kristin Neff said that on February 7 around 4 a.m., her husband looked out the kitchen window and saw a large animal lope away from the house, followed quickly by a similar but smaller animal that came from the same direction.

“He said it was the fastest moving animal he’d ever seen,” said Neff.

Once daylight broke, the Neffs went outside and took photos of what they believed to be two sets of cat prints in the snow. They had previously butchered a pig, and were drying the bones on the roof of their shed, and found the bones pulled down onto the back porch.

The Neffs weren’t the only ones to contact *The Baker County Press* about cougar suspicions in that timeframe.

The next night a second and unrelated citizen more in the area due east by the river, less than a mile from the Neffs if one were to draw a straight line between the two points as the crow flies, reported a similar experience. That person also pointed toward photos they took of what they believed to be tracks from a pair of oversized felines, and stated they had heard a sound they believed to be a cougar.

SEE TRACKS PAGE 7

	<b>Friday</b> Mostly cloudy with a few rain/snow showers. Highs near 40. Chance of precip is 30%. Night: Rain and snow showers. Low near 32.
	<b>Saturday</b> Mostly cloudy with rain/snow showers. Highs near 40. Chance of precipitation is 40%. Saturday Night: Mostly cloudy with a few rain/snow showers. Lows in the mid-20s.
	<b>Sunday</b> Scattered snow showers, otherwise partly sunny. Highs in the upper 30s. Chance of precipitation is 30%. Lows in the mid 20s.

Your weekend weather forecast for Baker County.

Our forecast made possible by this generous sponsor:

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