

2017 in Review



Photo submitted by Pam Haney.

February. This avalanche near Dark Canyon Road in Burnt River Canyon was 8' deep by 25' across.



Kerry McQuisten / The Baker County Press

An overload of heavy, wet snow brought down the roof of the building at 1916 Main Street beside the historic Geiser Grand Hotel, sending debris toppling down onto Resort Street.

February

Nine snow slides block areas around county.

This winter's snow loads and above-freezing temperatures combined to cause nine slides so far, on Thursday and Friday, January 19 and 20, the two biggest ones in the Rye and Burnt River valleys, according to Baker County Road Master Jeff Smith.

Mayday, Inc. speaks out about abused men.

According to the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence (NCADV), "One in four men is a victim of some form of physical violence by an intimate partner during their lifetimes" in the United States.

24% of intimate partner physical violence victims are male and one in eight men is severely injured by an intimate partner. This total does not include the high number of emotional abuse cases.

Snowload crushes historic building. On Sunday morning, Feb. 5, at 8:10 a.m., a multi-agency response was called into action as the old two-story Crabill Building, constructed in 1889, crumbled under a heavy snow load.

The building, which stands at 1916 Main Street, is owned by Barbara Sidway and husband, Dwight.

Snowbound calf rescued. 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.

Fighting for local jobs.

Last Friday morning, the 10th, 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.

OR46 gets collared. The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) placed a VHF collar on what is believed to be the alpha male, designated OR46, of the Minam Wolf Pack, giving the agency the ability to once again monitor the pack via radio for the first time since August 2015.

March

Solar eclipse meetings continue in Baker City.

"The 2017 monumental massive solar eclipse event is what we are here to talk about," was the welcome by Craig Farley of the Regional Solutions Office of Oregon to the assembled city, county and state agency representatives at Baker City Hall last Wednesday.

Intro to law enforcement classes held. Officer Lance Woodward of the Baker City Police Department will begin teaching an Introduction to Law Enforcement four-part course beginning Friday, March 3 at the Baker High School library.

Sycamore Tree gets new owner. March 1st through 4th, The Sycamore Tree held a launch party to celebrate its 29th anniversary and new ownership. Josey Gaslin became the official new owner of the

business.

Local toddler survives after rescue from pond.

22-month-old toddler, Matty Cunningham of Baker City, is lucky to be alive—so fortunate, in fact, that the story of his survival has spread to television news outlets such as KTVB in Portland and KBOI out of Boise, Idaho.

Last Thursday, according to Baker City Fire Chief Tom Wills, "Baker City Fire Department (BCFD) personnel responded to a reported drowning in the Salmon Creek area of Baker County.

Sumpter City Hall floods. In an ironic twist, Sumpter's City Hall flooded just days after Utility Manager Jeff McKinney reported at the March City Council meeting that there would be some inevitable flooding around town due to runoff. Bookkeeper Kathi Vinson discovered the flooding when she arrived for work Thursday morning, March 16th.

Firearms manufacturer expands. Clay Winton, owner of Crosshair Customs, has purchased the warehouse at 2300 Windmill Road. Crosshair Customs offers AR-15 firearm parts and gun accessories, as well as custom design services.

April

Carry the Fallen march comes to Halfway. River Colnot whose uncle, Kyle Colnot, was killed in action in Iraq in 2006, organized the area's first "Carry the Fallen" march.

Hearing set in BMCC lawsuit. A pre-trial hearing is set for late May in Baker County Circuit Court Case No. 16CV36651, Peggy Hudson v. Blue Mountain Community College (BMCC), in which Hudson, former BMCC Baker County Associate Vice President (AVP), seeks at least \$463,225, for claims of employment discrimination, to include whistleblowing, age discrimination, and common law wrongful discharge.

Wyden holds town hall. Senator Ron Wyden (D) held his 808th town hall Wednesday morning in the Baker High School (BHS) auditorium with a crowd of about 175 students and members of the public attending.

5J's four-day school week to continue. On Thursday, April 20, the Baker School District 5J voted unanimously to adopt the 2017-18 Interim School Calendar, keeping the existing four-day school week, adopted five years ago.

Multiple businesses burglarized. Over the weekend of April 22nd, several 10th Street Baker City businesses were burglarized, with four additional attempted burglaries, apparently by the same individual or individuals. Those businesses included Long's WaterWorks, Rushon Podiatry, Farmer's Insurance (Tom Van Diepen), and Baker County Custom Meats. Attempted burglaries were at the Animal Clinic, Forty Winks and a Splash, Elkhorn Chiropractic and Ne-Hi Signs.

On Wednesday, came in from the Campbell Street area with businesses such as Carquest, Paradise Truck Wash and Gene's Mobile Truck repair hit.

May

911 Consolidated Dispatch Center Director resigns. The Baker County Board of Commissioners held session Wednesday, May 3, 2017, 9 a.m., which included, among other details, the announcement that 911 Consolidated Dispatch Center Director Hope Lindsey is resigning, effective mid-May.

NASA coming to Burnt River. Around 35 people were in attendance for a meeting Monday evening in Unity to discuss preparations for the total solar eclipse on August 21. Scientists from NASA will make camp at the school during the event.

Sumpter park vandalized. More vandalism in Sumpter's Volunteer Park bathrooms was discovered this past week. Utility Manager Jeff McKinney said while cleaning, the City Recorder bumped the heater in one of the bathrooms and the heater knob fell off. Closer inspection revealed the wall heaters had been stolen from the bathrooms and the grills replaced so that it was not immediately obvious that they were missing.

Healthcare hecklers make for unusual town hall.

The story might have been that U.S. Representative Greg Walden chose the Baker High School gym as the location for his 14th town hall this year—had it not been for the unusual makeup of the audience.

Therein is the real story. Members of the group Health Care for All Oregon (HCAO), a Portland-based politically motivated nonprofit endorsed by the Oregon Communist Party and County Democratic Central Committees across Oregon to name a few, came to the gathering en masse.

Geiser Grand to expand. The Geiser Grand Hotel has been awarded an Oregon Main Street Revitalization Grant—the maximum grant size of \$100,000 to encourage their efforts to save the historic Crabill Building, soon to be known as the South Wing of the Geiser Grand Hotel.

City discusses new public safety utility fee. The final item on the agenda at the first City Council meeting of the month, the idea of a new public safety utility fee, was the hot topic.

Human trafficking in the spotlight. On Saturday, May 13, Soroptimists International of Baker City partnered with Gentry Ford and Ford Motor Company to hold their third annual event "Take the Wheel to Stop Human Trafficking."

Crowd turns out to support forest access. Over 130 people attended another successful Annual Forest Access For All (FAFA) Banquet and Auction.

Controversial fee ordinance passes first reading. City Manager Fred Warner stated that this new ordinance was based on the \$3 residential and \$6 commercial amounts the Budget Board had agreed on in the final budget meeting Wed. May 17th as a revenue enhancement. By imposing this amended amount, cuts to fire and police services were averted. Many from the public expressed opposition.



Susan Jones / The Baker County Press

In June, the old cottonwood in front of the library was removed for safety reasons.

June

Oregon Trail Interpretive Center celebrates 25 years. On Thursday, May 25, the National Historic Oregon Trail Interpretive Center celebrated its 25th anniversary with a free admission day. The Center had a reception, performances, and activities to celebrate the day. The speakers at the event included former Oregon governor Barbara Roberts.

Union Pacific train hits, kills pedestrian. On Sunday, May 28, 2017, at approximately 5:44 p.m., the Baker County Consolidated Dispatch Center received a 911 call from Union Pacific personnel stating one of their trains had just struck a pedestrian walking on the tracks near where the Burnt River and the Snake River intersect. 33 year-old Kristoffer McCreary of Caldwell, Idaho, was killed.

Apartment fire under investigation. Just before midnight on Tuesday, the Baker City Fire Department received a call to respond to a fire at the Powder River Terrace Apartments.

The fire, which quickly consumed the entryway, also left half of the eight apartments uninhabitable in one of the three complexes, and had several firefighters and one police officer rescuing residents and putting out the fire into the wee hours of the morning. 21 individuals in total responded, with three hours spent at the site.

Burnt River student wins congressional art award. U.S. Rep. Greg Walden (R-Hood River) today announced that Jin Sue Kim, a sophomore at Burnt River High School, has been selected as a Regional Winner for the 2017 Congressional Art Competition.

Gentry sells. According to a press release issued on Tuesday, June 20, 2017, after a 65-year run, Gentry Auto Group owner Ryan Gentry sold the Gentry's family-owned and -operated Oregon dealerships to Todd and Paula McCurry, who currently own the Mountain Home Auto Ranch dealerships, the Meridian Auto Ranch, Ontario Auto Ranch Chrysler Jeep Dodge Ram, and now the Ontario Auto Ranch Ford Subaru, and the newly named Baker City Auto Ranch.

Bentz suffers heart attack. On Sunday, June 11, Representative Cliff Bentz (R-Ontario) suffered a heart arterial blockage.

He was admitted to the Salem Hospital and is expected to make a full recovery.

Library's giant cottonwood removed. Resort Street was blocked off to

traffic for about three days while crews tackled the process of removing the giant old Cottonwood tree from the parking lot of The Baker County Public Library.

July

Labyrinth built. The Baker City Lion's Club, working in conjunction with the City of Baker City, and master brick mason Dave Gagnon and crew, broke ground on Baker City's first labyrinth.

Sheriff to supervise Call Center. City and County officials agreed that Sheriff Travis Ash, who has been proposing to take control of the 911 Center, should do so.

Merkley holds town hall. Senator Jeff Merkley (Democrat) stopped in Baker City on Saturday afternoon to hold a town hall at 4:30 p.m. Only 45 or so attended.

Motorcycle rally calm. The 2017 Hells Canyon Motorcycle Rally was relatively quiet for Baker City Police Department personnel this last weekend. All investigatory contacts the Department had were with local citizens.

Body found in hotel. On June 5, 2017, Baker County Consolidated Dispatch received a call from The Oregon Trail Motel regarding the death of one of their guests.

Tragedy strikes. For the last 35 years in July, the Miners Jubilee, honoring Baker County's heritage, has been highly anticipated throughout the community. Last Saturday, a cornerstone of that event, the Miners Jubilee Parade, was changed forever in a split-second with the death of seven-year-old Dylan Scott Thomas. Thomas was killed when he fell from a float sponsored by the local YMCA and was run over.

Woman hit by pickup. Last Wednesday, just after 6:30 p.m., police and medics were called to the 2100 block of 5th Street right behind Dairy Queen for an incident involving a pickup truck and a pedestrian. The female victim was severely injured, but did survive.

BHS choirs to go to New York. The High School Bel Canto and Trebel Choirs were selected to perform at Carnegie Hall in New York in April 2018 for a Choir Festival with multiple other choirs. They will be gone April 13th to the 16th.

Visitors Bureau renewed. The Professional Services Agreement between the County and the Visitors Bureau was renewed for only one year, instead of two.

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Submitted Photo.

Matty Cunningham is now home and on his way to a miraculous full recovery.