

2017 in Review

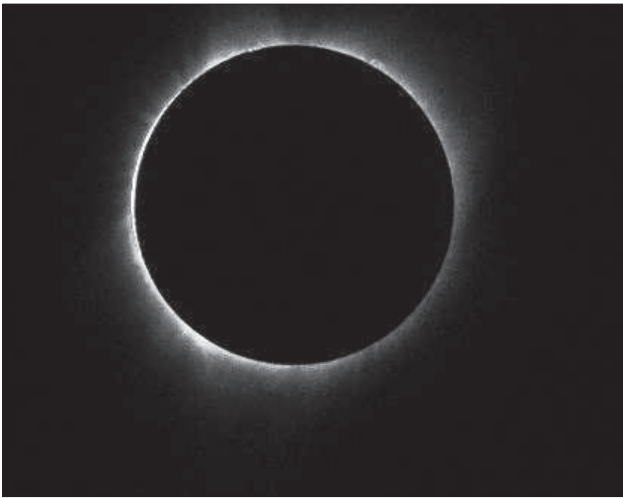


Photo courtesy of Chance Quintana.

Photographer Chance Quintana of Haines said he looked forward to taking photos of the eclipse for two years, and even captured the pink edging.

August

Community holds night out. On Tuesday August 2, nearly 800 people attended the annual Community Night Out at the Geiser-Pollman Park in Baker City.

City Council Member cited for criminal trespass. At around 8:40 p.m. last Tuesday, August 1, Baker City Council member, Adam Nilsson (46) of Hillcrest Drive in Baker City, was cited for criminal trespass while in possession of a firearm, and second degree criminal mischief at the old Lime plant near Huntington.

Nilsson's companion, Ashley Schroder (30) of Portland, was also cited with trespass.

Shrine Game held. Saturday, August 5th was the 65th annual East West All-Star Football Game that benefits Portland Shriners Hospital for Children. The event was filmed by and aired on ROOT Sports Network.

Woman jailed on murder charges. Kira Vansickle, age 27 of Meridian, Idaho, is housed in the Baker County Jail on charges of Murder, Manslaughter in the First Degree and Assault in the First Degree, after turning herself in last Friday under an outstanding Baker County Circuit Court warrant. Vansickle was arraigned on those charges on Monday. In September of 2014, Vansickle, then a Baker City resident, was charged with assault and criminal mistreatment after her eight-month-old infant niece suffered severe abusive head injuries while in her care on Carter Street.

Baker County inside path of totality. The Great American Eclipse proved Monday morning that some events just can't be captured in a way that fully does them justice.

Under nearly perfect viewing conditions, a 70-mile-wide lunar shadow crossed America from the Oregon Coast to the South Carolina Coast, with Baker County right in the path of totality.

At 10:24 a.m. on August 21, the light, which had slowly shifted to a golden saturation as the sun was obscured by the moon, fell into black. The shadows, which had gradually filled with crescent shapes and seemed to go backward, went out. Crickets began to chirp. The stars came out. The temperature dropped up to 10 degrees in some parts of the county.

Then for two minutes and a few seconds, it felt as if the world stood still.

September

City's dog park moves ahead. Volunteer Gail Duman and Joyce Bornstedt,

Technical Administration Supervisor of City of Baker City are heading a new project: Dog Park at Sam O. Duman and Bornstedt are working with other volunteers to construct two dog parks—a Large Dog Enclosure and a Small Dog Enclosure.

Man sustains burns. On Monday afternoon, Dispatch received a report of a structure and grass fire up Griffin Gulch, just outside Baker City on the property of Charlie Cree. Cree was transported to Saint Alphonsus Medical Center in Baker City with burns. It is suspected that the fire was caused by sparks from a grinder.

Fire Department awarded partial grant. Baker City received word this week that they have been awarded a \$426,000 SAFER (Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response) grant that would help fund three additional full-time positions to the Baker City Fire Department. The catch? The City would be required to provide a grant match of 25% for the first two years at a cost of approximately \$57,000 per year and a match of 65% the third-year costing approximately \$150,000.

Entrepreneurial spirit is alive. If you are a Baker City local or have been here for the summer, you have more than likely seen 10-year-old Londyn McAdams selling snow cones on the corner of Campbell and 2nd Street.

Man dies in Chandler Lane accident. On September 2, 2017, Baker County Dispatch received a report of a single motor vehicle accident on Chandler Lane at approximately 6:11 a.m. Upon arrival, law enforcement and EMS determined that the driver was deceased. The driver was identified as Travis James Talbott.

Flashflood hits south fork of Burnt River. Late in the afternoon on Friday, September 8, Baker County Commissioner Mark Bennett informed media that a "three foot wall of water" had just been reported by campers outside Unity in the area of the South Fork of the Burnt River.

Those reports were quickly verified as water, mud and debris swept through the burn area of the Rail Fire from last year, and buried roads.

Local veteran takes honor flight. Rep. Greg Walden (R-Hood River), greeted World War II veterans who came to Washington, D.C. last week to visit their memorial on the National Mall through Honor Flight of Eastern Oregon. Baker City veteran and World War II veteran William Evarts—who goes by Dale—met Walden and was presented a flag flown over the U.S. Capitol building in honor of his



Photo courtesy of the Baker County Sheriff's Office.

Cars pulled off to the shoulders along the freeway and roads near Lime awaiting the eclipse.

service to our country.

County Planning Commissioner investigated for skipping permit process.

According to Baker City Building Department Permit Technician Dawn Kitzmiller, she initiated an official investigation on April 3 of this year, following a complaint by a concerned Baker County citizen, of two reportedly non-permitted, completed home additions on Baker County Planning Commission member Robert Crawford's property in Halfway, which he owns with his wife, Elizabeth Crawford.

Deer rescued from manhole. On Friday, September 15, Kelly Cassidy at the Quail Ridge Golf Course discovered a deer that had fallen into a manhole near the pump house on Indiana.

Shawna Cox speaks locally. The historic Geiser Grand on Main Street in Baker City was jam-packed with individuals gathered to hear guest speaker, Shawna Cox, from Utah.

On January 26, 2016, Cox was one of two females inside the pickup truck in which Robert "LaVoy" Finicum spent his final moments. Finicum was shot and killed at a roadblock staged by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and Oregon State Police (OSP), as he, Cox and other occupiers from the Malheur Wildlife Refuge made their way along Highway 395, 53 miles from John Day en route to local law enforcement.

Multiple vehicle crash on Campbell. An unexpected medical condition was the cause of an accident last Wednesday, which eventually involved six vehicles, said Baker City Police Sgt. Wayne Chastain. James Young, age 85, was driving his white 2012 Dodge Ram pickup southbound on 10th Street, near A Street, when he lost consciousness.

Young's pickup crossed over into the northbound lanes of traffic and struck a parked greenish 2005 Nissan Altima belonging to Baker City Auto Ranch. The pickup continued south down the sidewalk where it then struck the fronts of three brand new Dodge pickups in the lot at Baker City Auto Ranch before coming to rest.

The green Altima, when hit, travelled backward unoccupied about 120 feet into the intersection of Campbell and 10th Street where it struck a 1994 Honda Civic driven by Sara Rudolph.

October

Local LEO receives medal of valor. On June 5, 2017, Officer Blake Hawkins of the Baker

City Police Department (BCPD), walked in a direction that would be counter-intuitive to most—into a smoke-filled apartment.

There, Hawkins assisted a disabled citizen out of that burning apartment complex at 1490 Resort Street in Baker City.

As a result of his actions, Hawkins is receiving the Medal of Valor from the Oregon Peace Officers' Association (OPOA) next month at their awards ceremony.

Pair produces 'Paint your Wagon' podcast.

Podcasters Doug Kenck-Crispin and Andy Lindberg traveled to Baker County to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the film "Paint Your Wagon" with a special segment for their "Kick Ass Oregon History" podcast.

"Paint Your Wagon" is a famous Western musical film starring Lee Marvin, Clint Eastwood, and Jean Seberg. The Nitty Gritty Dirt Band also appear in the movie. Several of the stars stayed in the Geiser Grand Hotel, so the podcasters followed suit. Shooting on that film began in the spring of 1968—coming up on that half-century mark.

Sumpter has bear problem. Sumpter is receiving more than the usual wildlife visitors this fall, with several bears raiding garbage cans throughout town. "Apparently, they're hungry, and they like garbage," said City Recorder Julie McKinney.

The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife trapped a couple of bears in the Sawmill Gulch area.

Oregon's Supreme Court comes to BHS.

Oregon Supreme Court Chief Justice Thomas Balmer came to Baker City for case hearings held at the Baker High School on Tuesday. Balmer was joined by the six other justices for the Oregon Supreme Court: Meagan Flynn, Jack Landau, Rives Kistler, Martha Walters, Lynn Nakamoto, and Rebecca Duncan. Members of the BHS Mock Trial Team had lunch with the justices.

Local dealers, citizens object to new car privilege tax. Randy Daugherty, owner of Baker Garage, a GMC dealership in Baker City, says his customers can expect an average, instant jump by hundreds of dollars per vehicle just for the "privilege" of owning a new car. Daugherty said, "We are very disappointed in all of this. To target a certain segment for a sales tax is wrong. The tax will have to be charged to the consumer. In our case it could be up to \$400 on a vehicle depending on how the rules play out."

Senate shakeup. Following a flurry of Salem rumors, Senator Ted Ferrioli (R-John Day) whose district includes Baker County, announced that



Samantha O'Conner / The Baker County Press

Summer. L-R: Moving their snow cone stand from Campbell Street to the park for a bit are Shelbe Miller, Londyn McAdams, and Kolbe Miller.



Photo courtesy of Quail Ridge Golf Course.

Oh deer! This little critter was successfully rescued after somehow getting stuck in this manhole.

he will indeed accept an appointment by Governor Kate Brown to the The Pacific Northwest Power Planning and Conservation Council. This position is one of a rare handful of salaried, six-figure appointments available to the Governor.

Vaping accident. On Wednesday, October 18, 17 year-old Blake Chastain of Baker City was injured from an e-cigarette exploding in his mouth. This is the first time locals have experienced such an accident—though the dangers have been reported elsewhere.

November

Citizens upset over BMTD bill. On Tuesday, November 7th, the Blue Mountain Translator District (BMTD) held their regular board meeting at the Baker City Hall Council Chambers. Security was requested from the Baker City Police Department due to heated communications between the BMTD and citizens who received their tax bills—which contained a surprise \$100 annual fee for BMTD services.

Disorderly property ordinance tabled. A proposed chronic nuisance property ordinance that proved controversial was tabled by Council.

Local bank branch to close. The Baker City Wells Fargo Bank branch, located in the Safeway building at 1205 Campbell Street, will close in May 2018.

Nilsson takes plea. On November 20, 2017, Baker City Council Member Adam Nilsson (dob 4/13/1971) of 307 Hillcrest Dr. Baker City, Oregon pled guilty to one count of Criminal Mischief in the Third Degree.

60 mph in town. On November 19 Baker City Police attempted to stop a pickup driven by Samuel Madison for excessive speed. Madison refused to stop and drove at varying speeds up to an estimated 60 miles per hour for approximately 10 blocks, before stopping.

December

Three move forward to fill senate seat. Six candidates tossed their hats into the ring to replace exiting senator Ted Ferrioli: Rep. Cliff Bentz, Malheur County; Mae Huston, Jefferson County; Suzan Ellis Jones, Baker County; Robert (Bob) Perry, Deschutes County; Ralph (Mike) Shirtcliff, Deschutes County; and Eric Wattenburg, Deschutes County. After a December 2 meeting of District PCPs, Bentz, Jones and Wattenburg move forward in the process.

More arrests at Lime. Deputy Eric Colton of the Baker County Sheriff's Office made two more arrests at the old Lime plant along the freeway near Huntington. Arrested were Robert Maurice Guerrero of Denver, Colorado and Staci Lee Helms of Lone Tree, Colorado.

Lighted legacy to relocate. A Baker City winter tradition will change locations next year, as this is the last year Nora Bass will have the Winter Walkthrough at her home on 19th Street.

Sheriff's deputy honored. On December 6th, Baker City's Rebecca Monahan received the Parole and Probation Deputy of the Year Award at the annual Oregon State Sheriff's Association conference in Bend, held December 3-7th.

Former rural fire chief indicted. Last Thursday, a Deschutes County Grand Jury charged former Baker Rural Fire Protection District Chief Dan Weitz, age 60, with the crimes of theft by deception and official misconduct in the first degree.

Train strikes car. Baker County Consolidated Dispatch received a call of a train versus passenger car collision in Haines. There were no fatalities, but injuries were severe. The accident occurred at the crossing located at 4th Street and the Anthony Lakes Highway.

Four individuals, Cade Browne, 19, Samantha Sexton, 19, Jacob Sexton, 18, and Sally Blair, 21, were in a white 2015 Dodge Dart.