

CRISIS CENTER

Continued from Page 1A

The grant from the Oregon Health Authority totals \$327,156.25 over the next two years.

Baxter had worked for New Directions Northwest from 2013 to 2015 as an alcohol and drug counselor at the Powder River Correctional Facility and at the Elkhorn Adolescent Treatment Center. The 2005 Baker High School graduate is the son of Greg and Karen Baxter of Baker City.

While he was working at New Directions, his wife, Veronica, completed a required internship to earn her bachelor's degree in social work from Brigham Young University-Idaho by working at Recovery Village, a New Directions program that provides alcohol and drug treatment for parents.

Sam left his job with New Directions to pursue his advanced degree at Southern Illinois University, Selander's alma mater. The move also put them closer to his wife's family in Connecticut. Originally from Venezuela, Veronica moved to Connecticut with her family at age 9.

Baxter said he and his wife discussed the offer to return to Baker City, and the two decided to load up their three sons, ages 4, 3 and 1, and head back.

"We thought about it and prayed about it," Baxter said. "I knew it would be a good move for us."

Selander said she is "thrilled" to have Baxter back in Baker City.

"Sam is always a solid team player," she said. "Thank goodness for individuals who grew up here and are willing to come home."

Baxter will oversee the crisis/

respite wing housed at the southwest end of St. Alphonsus Medical Center. The building has undergone several transformations since it opened as a nursing home in the community in 1987. The nursing home was closed in November 2014.

New Directions Northwest now leases office space in the building from St. Alphonsus, including room for the employees who work for the agency's Total Health program.

The crisis/respite wing includes five beds available around the clock, seven days a week to those who are experiencing a mental health crisis.

"The client's safety is our first concern," Baxter stated in a press release. "We conduct a risk assessment to determine if they are suicidal, homicidal, and if there is a medical need for treatment. If the client needs to be taken to a medical facility, we determine the level of care needed, such as respite care, or medical assistance at the ER or even an acute care facility out of the area for psychiatric placement."

People in need may stay in the respite rooms for up to 30 days with a team of daytime, nighttime and weekend crisis workers and a case manager.

Veronica Baxter also fills in at the crisis center as a Spanish language interpreter and as one of several on-call "psychiatric sitters." The sitters talk with people in the safety of the crisis center where clients also will be served snacks and meet with a crisis counselor and even receive medical treatment if necessary.

Sam Baxter began his new role back in Baker City on June 4 and is working to obtain state licensing for the program. He's writing policies and procedures as part of that pro-

cess as well as providing backup for the mobile response team. Next will come site inspections and program and procedural reviews.

Baxter also hopes to expand the working relationships with law enforcement, the hospital and the Baker School District, community partners that are often part of a team when a crisis takes place.

Selander says New Directions has always responded to crises in the community on an informal basis, which often has taken mental health workers to the hospital emergency room, the jail or even the park.

And while the grant money is for staffing only, New Directions made the decision to bear the cost of the respite beds because of the need in the community, Selander said.

"It's the right thing to do," she said, adding that the person in crisis could be more traumatized by being taken to the hospital or to the jail rather than to a quiet place to receive care.

A person undergoing a mental health crisis also can be disruptive to patients receiving care for medical emergencies at the hospital, she said.

Strengthening partnerships also will help provide better service in the community, Selander maintains.

"We had the opportunity to team up with law enforcement last spring when officers came to New Directions for mental health first-aid training," she said. "The next step will be crisis training."

Selander has receiving crisis intervention training and plans to bring it to the community through Greater Oregon Behavioral Health

Intervention (GOBHI). The plan is to train mental health, law enforcement and emergency room workers together to form a Crisis Response Team.

Sheriff Travis Ash, a member of the New Directions Board of Directors, said his department and New Directions have worked well together in the past. Still, he is appreciative of the benefits the mobile crisis team and the respite rooms can provide for residents throughout the county.

"I'm looking forward to help in the field, rather than us having to transport people or us having to go to the emergency room," Ash said.

The sheriff said the respite rooms allow the deputies to meet the mental health professionals at the site, ensure everyone is safe and then hand off the person in crisis to the clinician and return to patrol.

"Having this respite room and the ability to call somebody is better for the client, better for law enforcement and better for the mental health worker," Ash said. "I think the community as a whole will benefit."

Baker City Police Chief Dustin Newman also appreciates the new services. He believes the respite crisis center will provide a more comfortable setting for people experiencing a mental health crisis.

"The neat thing about it is we don't have the facilities for these folks to stay in, and this will give people a place to stay and provide them with the services they need," he said.

"When somebody is dealing with a mental health crisis, the last place they need to be is in jail," Newman said.

He also speaks highly of the mobile crisis team.

"We can get help to people right away rather than waiting, to be able to give them the help they need in an environment they are comfortable in," Newman said.

The mobile crisis team members have up to three hours to respond and have adjusted their schedules to ensure coverage throughout the county in that time frame. New Directions has received more than 300 crisis calls since the beginning of the year, Baxter said.

Although Baxter responds as needed as part of the mobile crisis team, he also will staff an office at Baker High School for a couple of hours every morning as classes are getting under way.

Superintendent Mark Witty said he approached Selander a couple of months ago about helping the district serve students in crisis and she agreed to do what she could.

"We're providing space, a computer and a phone," Witty said. "I'm excited about being able to work more directly with New Directions Northwest and to have Sam meet with students."

Witty sees Baxter's ability to get to know students and their families at the high school as a way to provide the crisis help needed in a more timely manner.

Students experiencing mental health crises are becoming more common in schools throughout the state, Witty said. He expressed support for Selander and her staff and the services they provide in the community.

"We are collaborating to work with families and to try to support them," Witty said.

LAWSUIT

Continued from Page 1A

Vanderwall said she has no concerns about Lohner and his ability to serve as police chief.

"He will be a fantastic fit for the town of Lakeview," she said.

There are three officers on the police force and Lohner will make four, Vanderwall said. One more person is needed to bring the department to its full staff of five officers.

The last chief, Will Behan, resigned in June after just two months in the position, she said. Ray Rau, current Nyssa police chief, had served as interim chief in Lakeview before Behan was hired.

Vanderwall said Rau, who had served with Lohner on the Oregon Association Chiefs of Police recommended him for the job.

Lohner said in a telephone interview Thursday that he hadn't necessarily planned to take the Lakeview job when he retired, although he had driven to the community in January or February to help Rau assess the department.

Lohner said he chose not to apply for the job at that time because he wanted to finish out in Baker City. And when Behan was hired this spring, Lohner said it appeared that the door of opportunity had closed.

Since his retirement, Lohner said he has been working in excavation across Washington and Idaho.

"It has been a relaxing

summer and a good reset for me," he said.

And then when Behan resigned after two months, Lohner said it appeared that "this was the third time God had opened the door."

"I thought about it a lot and prayed about it," before accepting the job, he said.

Lohner said he told Vanderwall that he had committed to his excavating job for the summer and had hunting commitments.

But by Oct. 1 he will begin working to see if he can help put the Lakeview department on the right track to retain employees.

He will earn \$75,000 per year in the position. His salary in Baker City was \$80,444.

"It definitely will be a challenge," Lohner said. "But I'm committed to going down there to help get them on the right track."

Lohner said it would be his hope that, just as he had done in Baker City, he would train an officer who could step in to fill the chief's position for the long term.

"I feel the calling," he said. "I feel that's what God wants me to do."

Several Lakeview residents turned out for a meeting Aug. 14 to express concerns and to ask questions about Lohner's hiring after they learned about Addison's lawsuit.

Top concerns expressed were Addison's allegations of Lohner's heavy-handed treatment of him in what Addison claims was retaliation for an editorial Addison

wrote criticizing the police department.

The editorial was published in March 2008 by the former weekly newspaper, The Record-Courier.

Lakeview residents also expressed concern that the town's taxpayers might have to pay part of any legal fees Lohner might be found responsible for at trial and that he would be gone to attend court sessions while on the town's payroll as police chief.

Vanderwall said during the Aug. 14 meeting that those issues could be handled in a contract and that Lohner would be responsible for paying any costs related to the litigation.

The civil lawsuit had been scheduled to go to trial in April but was delayed when Lohner appealed U.S. District Judge Michael H. Simon's ruling that Lohner was not entitled to qualified immunity from Addison's claims because he was acting outside the scope of his job description to warn Baker City businesses about Addison.

Last month a three-member Court of Appeals panel heard arguments on the matter and a decision is pending.

Addison, 53, alleges that Lohner retaliated against him because he wrote an editorial criticizing the police department for what Addison contended was an illegal search of Baker High School during the Class 1A basketball tournament.

In arguing the case before the Appeals Court, Addison's attorney, Clifford S. Davidson of the Sussman Shank law firm in Portland, said Lohner conducted "a six-year-long campaign of retaliation and harassment" against Addison because of the editorial.

Addison contends Lohner interfered with his employment at two separate jobs, one as a reporter at the Baker County Press, another former weekly newspaper, and the other at New Directions Northwest where he worked briefly as a supported employment specialist.

Lohner denies harassing Addison or directing his staff to harass him and he denies advising Addison's past employers to take any adverse

actions against him.

Addison originally filed his lawsuit in October 2015 and he filed a second amended complaint on Jan. 16, 2017, alleging that the City and Lohner retaliated against his right to freedom of speech, interfered with his job opportunities, defamed him and deprived him of due process.

Lohner's attorney, Robert E. Franz Jr. of Springfield, argued before the appeals court panel on July 11 that Lohner also has free speech guarantees under the First Amendment.

He also contended that Lohner was acting in his role as police chief when he talked with Addison's former employers to warn them about what he saw as Addison's erratic and unpredictable behavior.

Franz argued that Lohner's actions were within the scope and course of his employment as police chief, which called for him to work with community partners and businesses.

Lohner's appeal was heard by judges Kim McLane Wardlaw, John Byron Owens and Rosemary Marquez.

There is no time limit in which the court must rule, Davidson, Lohner's attorney, stated in an email to the Herald.

If the appeals court panel affirms the District Court ruling denying Lohner qualified immunity, Lohner has several choices, Davidson said. First, Lohner could accept the ruling, which would return the case to District Court and the city's insurance would settle with Addison, or the case would continue to trial.

Lohner also could choose to move for reconsideration of the matter; or move for the entire 9th Circuit Court of Appeals to consider the issue; or seek review in the U.S. Supreme Court.

"Regardless, our claims proceed against the City," Davidson stated. "This appeal was about Lohner's potential liability."

OHV TRAILS

Continued from Page 6A

While the area lacks any confirmed wolf packs, Cuddy said it represents a corridor that wolves could use as they disperse from Northeast Oregon.

"It's a vital corridor between the (Blue Mountains) and the Cascades with regard to wolf recovery," she said.

While the judge didn't uphold all of the plaintiffs' claims, Cuddy said the scope of the decision gives them a solid case when the issue is reviewed. Paul Dewey, executive director of Central Oregon LandWatch, said having support from groups such as the Oregon Hunters Association and ODFW helped

their case.

"You don't see those groups in court that often, so you know that this is serious," Dewey said.

ELTRYM THEATER
AUG 31 - SEPT 6

ALPHA PG-13
In the previous installment, a young man struggles to return home after being reported from his home.

FRI & SAT: (4:10) 7:10, 9:40
SUN & MON (4:10) 7:10 TUES-THURS: 7:10

CRAZY RICH ASIANS PG-13
This contemporary romantic comedy, based on a global bestseller, follows a naive New Yorker (Rachel Chu) in Singapore to meet her boyfriend's family.

FRI & SAT: (4:00) 7:00, 9:35
SUN & MON (4:00) 7:00 TUES-THURS: 7:00

THE INCREDIBLES 2 PG
Bob Parr (Mr. Incredible) is left to control the kids while Helen (Elastigirl) is out saving the world.

FRI & SAT: (3:50) 6:50, 9:30
SUN & MON (3:50) 6:50 TUES-THURS: 6:50

*No Ticket on Tuesday (1) Bargain Matinee
1809 First • 541-523-2522 • eltrym.com

Tires LES SCHWAB

4 WHEEL ALIGNMENT \$99.50

WE GLADLY MAKE APPOINTMENTS

VISA MasterCard DISCOVER AMERICAN EXPRESS

LEW BROS.
210 Bridge Street
541-523-3679
AFTER HOURS:
541-518-7100

GRUMPY'S Repair & Inc.
"You'll love the work we do. I guarantee it." - JR

REPAIR TRUCKS
541-523-3200

225 H Street • East of I-84 • 541-523-3200 • grumpysrepair.com

Saint Alphonsus

Eric Sandefur, D.O.
Sports Medicine
Orthopedic Trauma
Shoulder Replacement
In-Office Carpal Tunnel Surgery
Knee and Shoulder Arthroscopy
Hip and Knee Treatment and/or Replacement

Christopher Liby, D.O.
Dr. Christopher Liby, is a General Surgeon, currently practicing at Saint Alphonsus Medical Center—Baker City.

The best kind of surgical care is all about you.

541-523-1797 • saintalphonsus.org/bakercity