



Robert Adams perches atop the pile to guide the conveyor's distribution of potatoes evenly from front to back inside the cellar, which can hold 3,000 tons of spuds.

SPUDS

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Ward, who is chairman of the Oregon Potato Commission, said there's a good chance that the potatoes tumbling past on the belt, after they're turned into french fries, will be shipped across the Pacific Ocean.

He said about 65 percent of Oregon-grown potatoes are exported, and Asia is the most important, and fastest-growing, foreign market.

About 4,000 acres in Baker County are cultivated in potatoes annually.

Although sales data at the county level are no longer available, in 2013 potatoes were Baker County's most valuable row crop, with gross sales totaling about \$12.2 million.

Ward is optimistic about this year's crop, despite a summer distinguished by record-setting heat and a severe drought.

"Overall it was a very good growing year," said Ward, whose family has been raising potatoes in Baker Valley for 103 years.

His grandfather, Clyde Ward, brought in the family's first crop in 1915.

The unprecedented August heatwave — the all-time high temperature record at the Baker City Airport was set on consecutive days, 108 on Aug. 9 and 109 on Aug. 10 — undoubtedly affected yields, Ward said, since potato plants all but quit growing at temperatures above about 90.

But he doesn't think the excessive heat lasted long enough to result in significant



Larry Plumbtree and other outside crew members filter the autumn dust as they keep conveyors moving.

losses to the Ward family's potato crop, which totaled 160 acres.

Although Ward concedes he would have appreciated a couple of thunderstorms this summer — a common occurrence but one conspicuously absent in 2018 — he said no farmer would risk raising potatoes without having a reliable source of irrigation water.

"Potatoes are one crop you can't short on water," Ward said.

He thinks the dense wildfire smoke that settled into Baker Valley for several days in August might have stunted potatoes more than the heat did.

Ward gestures toward Elkhorn Peak, the 8,900-foot mountain about 10 miles to the west that stands out sharply against the brilliant blue sky on this crystalline day.

The view was quite different on those smoky afternoons.

"When you're standing here and you can't even see Elkhorn Peak, that's pretty thick smoke," Ward said. "That has to limit photosynthesis."

August is vital, he said, the month when potatoes do much of their "bulking."



Mark Ward talks about his family's potato harvest, an annual event that dates to 1915.

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Mark Ward talks about his family's potato harvest, an annual event that dates to 1915.

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Art winners announced

Crossroads Carnegie Art Center is celebrating its 20th-annual "Art at the Crossroads" regional show during September.

The show opened Sept. 7, and the exhibit was judged by artist Amy Lay of Medical Springs.

Lay chose six artists in two different categories. A first- and second-place in both two-dimensional and three-dimensional work, as well as a Best of Show winner. Visitors during the opening reception were given a ballot to vote for their favorite artwork, and at the end of the evening a People's Choice award was announced. Crossroads received 140 pieces of art work submitted by 55 local and regional artists. Most all mediums were submitted: watercolor, oil, acrylic, clay, encaustic, photography, pastel, wood, steel, glass, mixed media and gourd art.

Three Baker City artists received awards. Cindy Frazier received the Northwest Pastel Society award for her pastel and pastel pencil drawing titled "Foxy Lady." Mike Meyer received a second place award in the three-dimensional category for repurposing wood to create a rustic recycled wooden bench. Best of Show was awarded to Sandra Ford for her oil painting on canvas titled "Main and Valley Alley."

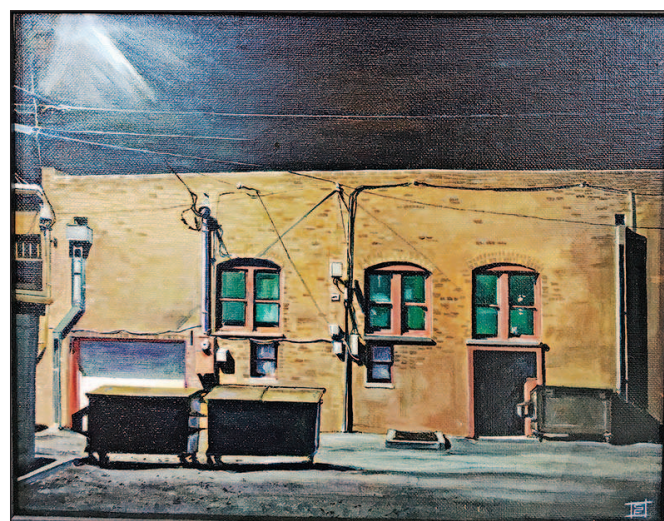
"We are so pleased and honored to showcase the work of so many talented artists in our area," said Kristin Hauter, community art director.



Cindy Frazier was awarded for her pastel and pastel pencil drawing, "Foxy Lady."



Mike Meyer used old wood to create a rustic bench.



Sandra Ford's oil painting, "Main and Valley Alley"

HIKERS

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This year Garner, who has been teaching in the Baker School District for 26 years, decided to expand the trip to include all six Brooklyn kindergarten classes.

"The biggest reason we do it is because it is an amazing experience for the kids," Garner said.

She was joined Tuesday by students from Trace Richardson's and Kelsey Lehman's classes.

Both Richardson and Lehman, who grew up in Baker City, are fairly new teachers to Brooklyn, with neither of them being at the school for longer than three years.

Richardson put his skills from firefighting in the summers to work early in the hike on a sunny but cool early autumn day.

While the students were crossing a log bridge over Parker Creek, the stream that flows from Hoffer Lakes, one student slipped but was quickly pulled out by Richardson.

Garner said at least one student gets wet every year. After getting pulled out, the student was given a sweatshirt from one of the chaperones and continued on the hike.

Garner said kids don't tend to get upset about falls

"I thought the kids really enjoyed it so I think it is something that we are probably going to do again in the future."

— Trace Richardson, kindergarten teacher at Brooklyn Primary School

unless adults make a big deal about it. In addition to the one student who fell in the stream, at least two students had minor falls that only resulted in scraped knees.

For Garner, this year's trip was slightly different. Over the summer she hurt one of her knees and wears a knee brace at times. She doesn't know how she hurt it.

Partially because of her injury, she was the last person in the line behind the students during the hike. Usually she would lead the hike, but that job was taken by Richardson. One of the rules of the hike was that students were not allowed to be behind Garner or in front of Richardson.

"I thought the kids really enjoyed it so I think it is something that we are probably going to do again in the future," Richardson said.

This year's hike took longer than Garner expected, which she says was due to the fact that so many

students needed to use the bathroom before the start of the hike. Despite there being triple the amount of students there were not any additional issues.

When the classes reached Hoffer Lakes they stopped to rest and have a snack. After going back down to Anthony Lake they went to eat lunch.

While waiting by Anthony Lake before lunch the students encountered fisherman Mark Duerr, who showed off two trout he had caught at Anthony Lake. He said he could hear the students during their entire hike and while they ate lunch at picnic tables nearby.

This field trip is one of about four trips that kindergartners will go on this year. Unlike some field trips students take, such as traveling to the Boise Zoo, the hike didn't come at any cost other than the bus ride. This field trip takes place during the third week of school making it the first of the year.

"They were actually able to mingle and work with and meet their new classmates that they are going to have all the way through high school," Richardson said.

After returning from the trip, students learned about trees and aquatic wildlife.

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MOVIE TIMES SEPTEMBER 21-27

SEARCHING PG-13

After his 16-year-old daughter goes missing, a father breaks into her laptop to look for clues to find her.

FRI & SAT: (4:10) 7:10, 9:35
SUN: (4:10), 7:10 **MON-THURS:** 7:10

THE PREDATOR R

When the universe's most lethal hunter returns to Earth, only a ragtag crew of ex-soldiers and a disgruntled science teacher can save the human race.

FRI & SAT: (4:00) 7:00, 9:30
SUN: (4:00), 7:00 **MON-THURS:** 7:00

THE NUN R

Horror. A priest confronts a malevolent force in the form of a demonic nun.

FRI & SAT: (4:20) 7:20, 9:40
SUN: (4:20), 7:20 **MON-THURS:** 7:20

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