

VFW essay, speech contest winners

Two Baker County students were named district winners in the Veterans of Foreign Wars annual Patriot's Pen essay contest and Voice of Democracy speech contest Dec. 9.

Savannah Potter, a senior at Harvest Christian Academy, was the district winner in the Voice of Democracy speech contest. She will compete at the state contest Jan. 25 in Eugene.



Potter

Ashlyn Dalton of Baker City was the district winner in the Patriot's Pen essay contest. She will also compete at the state event Jan. 25 in Eugene.

Other results from the local post and district competitions.

Patriot's Pen essays

POST LEVEL

- 1st, Jack Heriza, Haines
- 2nd, Ashlyn Dalton, Baker City
- 3rd, Makayla Rabourne,

25 in Eugene.

• 4th, Morgan Pelcha, seventh-grade, Harvest Christian Academy

DISTRICT LEVEL

- 1st, Ashlyn Dalton
 - 2nd, Jack Heriza
- One point separated the two.

Voice of Democracy speeches

POST LEVEL

- 1st, Savannah Potter, senior, Harvest Christian

Academy

- 2nd, Naomi Potter, freshman, Harvest Christian Academy

- 3rd, Matt Wirth, senior, Harvest Christian Academy
- 4th, Jenna Lepley, senior, Harvest Christian Academy

DISTRICT LEVEL

- 1st, Savannah Potter, Union
- 2nd, Forrest George, Joseph
- 3rd, Riley Masters, Joseph

Idaho Power agrees on salmon plan

By Katy Nesbitt
For WesCom News Service

After almost two years of negotiations, Idaho Power Company has agreed to release Chinook salmon and steelhead in Pine Creek in eastern Baker County.

As part of its relicensing requirements with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, Idaho Power must receive clean water certification from both Oregon and Idaho. Oregon law requires fish passage above dams, and Idaho Power's Hells Canyon Dam, which was finished in 1967, blocks the migration of salmon and steelhead into Snake River tributaries including Pine Creek, which starts in the Wallowa Mountains and flows through Halfway before reaching the Snake near Oxbow.

The new agreement

requires that within 90 days of the Commission's issuance of a new license for the Idaho Power's Hells Canyon Complex (Hells Canyon, Oxbow and Brownlee dams), Idaho Power will develop, in collaboration with Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW), a plan for Pine Creek that provides for "safe, timely, and effective placement of adult spring chinook salmon and summer steelhead into Pine Creek and an evaluation of the juvenile production associated with those placements."

The agreement states that immediately following placement of adult spring chinook salmon and summer steelhead into Pine Creek, Idaho Power will study how effective the fish releases are.

The agreement also states Idaho Power will annu-

ally trap juvenile spring chinook salmon and summer steelhead to collect data on populations, ages and outmigrating time, as well as insert passive integrated transponder tags into 5,000 fish of each species.

Idaho Power's original 50-year license for the Hells Canyon Complex expired in 2005. The company has been operating under annual licenses since.

After receiving a new long-term license, Idaho Power will pay the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality \$200,000 per year for 16 years to improve water quality in the Snake River and its Oregon tributaries.

Within three years of receiving a new license Idaho Power will identify adult fish migration barriers such as water temperature, flow,

grade and natural and man-made barriers and within five years the company will do the same for native salmonids in Powder River basins below Thief Valley Dam.

Within 20 years Idaho Power will prepare reports determining the pathogen risk assessment associated with upstream passage of native migratory fish into Oregon tributaries and an evaluation of habitat conditions including production potential in Pine Creek and the mainstem Snake River upstream of Hells Canyon Dam.

Idaho Power's plan to continue anadromous fish runs by trapping fish and releasing them above Brownlee Reservoir failed because the young fish couldn't navigate the 53 miles of slack water in the reservoir.

LOCAL BRIEFING

Baker City Police 'Shop With a Cop' event

Members of the Baker City Police Department will undertake a "Shop With a Cop" event Friday at Bi-Mart.

Here's how the program works: Students referred by their elementary school teachers have been invited to join police officers to shop for gifts for immediate family members Friday morning at the Baker City store, beginning about 9:15 a.m. When the shopping spree is over, the children will head to the Nazarene Church to play games, eat lunch, wrap presents and make a craft before going home with their goodies for the families, according to the police department. The money, food, transportation and crafts all have been donated. Baker City Fire Department employees also will participate in the event.

Gina Perkins hired at Small Biz Center

LA GRANDE — Gina Perkins, a longtime Baker Valley resident, has been hired as assistant director at the Eastern Oregon Small Business Development Center in La Grande.



Perkins

"It is an exciting opportunity to be a part of such a great team providing valuable services to those looking to start or grow their business," Perkins said in a press release.

Greg Smith, the Center's director and also the contract economic developer for Baker County, said in the press release, "Gina possesses a strong skill set, leadership qualities and a level of professionalism which will greatly assist in helping clients achieve their goals."

The Small Business Development Center provides free, confidential business advising services. To schedule an appointment, call the Center at 541-962-1532 or by email at eousbdc@gmail.com

Conservation Districts dinner Jan. 18

The annual dinner meeting for the Baker County Soil and Water Conservation Districts is set for Friday, Jan. 18, at 5:30 p.m. at the Baker Elks Lodge, 1896 Second St.

Tickets are \$15. Tickets must be bought in advance at 3990 Midway Drive at Baker City. More information is available by calling 541-523-7121, extension 100.

There are four soil and water conservation districts in the county — Baker Valley, Keating, Eagle Valley and Burnt River.

PRICING

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That complaint was eventually passed along to Byrnes Oil officials, who had 15 days to respond to it. On Dec. 14 Dias received a email and call from Mitch Byrnes, the company's head of sales in La Grande and the son of owner Sam Byrnes.

"I want you to know that we were in no way attempting to deceive our customers when they filled at our cardlock locations by having incorrect pricing posted," Mitch Byrnes wrote in the email.

The Baker City cardlock station is at 2885 13th St., near the railroad tracks.

Byrnes wrote that the new Oregon law which allows gas stations in some rural counties,

"They appear to be trying to do the right thing, which is nice. I'm happy that they're fixing the problem."

— Tonya Dias, who filed a complaint against Byrnes Oil

including Baker and Union, to allow self service fueling was part of the issue. Prior to the law taking effect, Byrnes Oil allowed only people who have the company's fuel card to use its cardlock stations. When the law first went into effect in 2016 the company had placed "notes" stating that the price would be 5 cents per gallon more for those without cards. At some point the notes went away and were not replaced, something Byrnes acknowledged in his email to Dias.

The company had also failed to include in its advertised price a clean fuels tax.

"It leaves a pit in my stomach knowing that there are individuals who feel we have betrayed them," Byrnes wrote.

Dias said that in their phone conversation, Byrnes was apologetic and sincere.

"I'm happy that they're fixing the problem and I hope that they really do that, it's unfortunate that it had to come to that," Dias said. "I just wish there was some kind of punishment that went along with the ruling that they were doing something wrong."

"They appear to be trying to do the right thing, which is nice," Dias said.

According to Oregon law if an advertised price is conditional

the condition must be advertised. Regulations also require that the street sign accurately reflect the price charged at the pump. There are also weights and measure requirements that say the price sign, the price displayed on the pump and the price on the end receipt must all be the same.

Steven Harrington, program manger for Oregon Weights and Measures, said that based on his conversation with Byrnes Oil officials, he doesn't believe the company was intentionally trying to mislead customers.

"They were very cooperative in terms of agreeing to make the changes that were necessary to bring them into compliance," Harrington said.

He said the state agency will follow up to ensure the problem

doesn't recur.

Harrington said he is not aware of any past complaints against the company related to pricing.

Violations of weights and measures laws are class B misdemeanors and if there was a case of fraud the investigation would be taken over by the Oregon Department of Justice.

Dias said that although she appreciates Byrnes Oil fixing the problem with its price signs, she believes the company should have to compensate customers who were overcharged.

"They admit that they were doing wrong and they don't have to try to make reparations to people for that, I just don't think that's right," Dias said.

She thinks the company should publicly apologize as well.

HEART TO HEART

Students make holiday special for veterans

Just a note to express pride in the fifth-grade students at South Baker Intermediate School who made a real effort to sign and decorate holiday cards for the men and women in the Oregon Veterans Care Home. Some students wrote special notes and some were signed by every child in the classroom. Many took the extra time to personally thank the veterans for their service, and lots sent Christmas wishes.

What a gift, to find a card on your meal tray or specially delivered to you during this time of the year, signed to show respect and to make sure that important people are recognized for their service.

Many of this group of students have participated in this worthy project for a number of years. We must thank the teachers who generously shared their class time and who continue to not only teach our children, but guide them as they grow. It's easy to be proud of them every time they do this. The holiday is just more special because kids care.

Tricia Everson
Baker City

TV district strives to make improvements

Many TV viewers in Baker County last week found themselves without the ability to view any TV channels. A power outage on the Blue Mountain Translator District's Baker translator, located on Beaver Mountain

about 15 miles south of Baker City resulted in a complete blackout of channels in Baker County, and the loss of KTVB in Union County. We are thankful for OTEC's quick work to restore power, and want to take this opportunity to remind viewers how signals are delivered here.

KATU, KOIN, KGW, KRCW, KPTV, and KPDX are sent to Island City over a fiber optic network and microwaved to Mt. Fanny above Cove. These channels are hopped to Mt. Harris above Imbler and Beaver Mountain south of Baker City. KTVB is sent directly from

Boise to Beaver Mountain then hopped to Mt. Fanny before reaching Mt. Harris. Problems in Island City or Mt. Fanny can prevent Portland channels from being broadcast anywhere in Union and Baker counties. Problems on Mt. Harris can prevent all channels from being broadcast in north Union County. Problems on Beaver Mountain, such as last week's power outage, can prevent all channels from being broadcast in Baker City, also affecting the transmission of KTVB in Union County. BMTD continues to work with partners to improve the resilience

of our network, most recently by installing new components on Mt. Fanny in October that make our equipment less vulnerable to lightning-induced power surges.

For more information, visit www.bmtd.org, email bmtd.

org@gmail.com, call 541-963-0196, or visit our new office on the 3rd floor of the Joseph Building in La Grande.

Alex McHaddad
Secretary/Treasurer
Blue Mountain Translator District

Community-Wide Christmas Eve Service
December 24th • 6 - 7PM
Baker High School Auditorium

The churches of Baker City present a community-wide Christmas Eve Service.

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CONGRATULATIONS

to the December Baker High School-Kiwanis Students of the Month!

Jazmine Labonti

Wraylee Setzkom

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