

# Auditions Nov. 7 and 9 for performance celebrating women getting right to vote

■ Baker City chapter of AAUW plans theater event in May 2020

By Lisa Britton

For the Baker City Herald

In 2020, the Baker City Chapter of AAUW will celebrate the 100th anniversary of the 19th Amendment, which granted women the right to vote.

To honor the women who helped pass that amendment, AAUW is planning performances of a reader's theater where actors portray those who were active in women's suffrage.

But first, they need actors. AAUW will hold open auditions at 7 p.m. on Nov. 7 and at 10 a.m. on Nov. 9 at Eastern Oregon Regional Theatre, 2101 Main St.

A reader's theater is a style in which the actors do not memorize their lines.

Everyone in the community is invited to try out for

a part in this theater event. Presentations will occur sometime in May 2020.

The ratification of the 19th Amendment was an important event in the political history of the United States.

Darlene Scheler, a member of AAUW, provides these highlights of events leading up to the ratification:

- 1848: Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Lucretia Mott organized the Seneca Falls convention to help women organize petitions and picket to win the vote.

- 1878: an amendment for the right of women to vote was first introduced to congress

- 1919: On June 4 the right for women to vote in national elections was passed as the 19th amendment to the Constitution of

the United States

- 1920: On Aug. 18 the 19th amendment was ratified giving women a legal right to vote.

- The first territorial legislature of the Wyoming Territory granted women the vote in 1869. On Sept. 6, 1870 Louisa Ann Swain of Laramie, Wyoming, became the first woman to cast a vote in a general election.

- Oregon was the 25th state to allow women to vote in general elections. On Jan. 20, 1920 Oregon ratified the 19th amendment.

Scheler said that in addition to voting rights, women's suffrage battled economic oppression, sexual violence, and the law that made women little more than property of their husbands.

## LOCAL BRIEFING

### Matt Shirtcliff to be sworn in as Baker County Circuit judge Friday afternoon at the Courthouse

District Attorney Matt Shirtcliff will be sworn in as Baker County Circuit Court judge during an investiture service Friday.

It will begin at 3 p.m. in the Baker County Circuit Courtroom at the Courthouse, 1995 Third St.

Oregon Gov. Kate Brown appointed Shirt-

cliff to replace Judge Greg Baxter, who retired Thursday. Baxter has served as Baker County Circuit Court judge since Jan. 1, 2001.

Shirtcliff has worked in the District Attorney's Office since 1994. He spent six years as a deputy district attorney under Baxter.

He was first elected district attorney in 2001 after Baxter moved into the judge's position and has served five terms in the position.

## DENIED

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Nilsson said he agreed to accept the agreement that called for him to plead guilty to one count of third-degree criminal mischief, a Class C misdemeanor, with a second charge of criminal trespassing with a firearm, a Class A misdemeanor, to be dismissed, on certain conditions.

The charges arose from an Aug. 1, 2017, incident in which Nilsson and his friend, Ashley E. Schroder of Portland, were both charged with trespassing at the abandoned, and since dismantled, cement plant at Lime. Nilsson also was charged with criminal mischief for painting graffiti at the site.

Sheriff's Department officers Gabe Maldonado and Jef Van Arsdall arrested the two and held them in handcuffs at the site for several hours, Nilsson says.

"My entire life has been upturned and upended for something that amounted to a traffic ticket," he told Baxter.

As a result of the incident and an August 2017 search of his home at 307 Hillcrest Drive, Nilsson has filed a \$1.3 million lawsuit against Baker County and Sheriff Travis Ash.

Nilsson said he and Schroder should have been told to move on or even cited and released like others who stopped at Lime to view artwork painted on the decaying

structures at the site.

"I never considered committing a crime at Lime," he said.

Nilsson told Baxter that he accepted the plea bargain because he believed at the time that a charge of second-degree criminal trespassing against Schroder would be dismissed. Instead, she was prosecuted and pleaded guilty to the charge through her attorney, Christopher Bocci of Salem. The crime was reduced from a Class C misdemeanor to a Class A violation and Schroder was fined \$100.

Nilsson stated that he also had understood that his time serving on the Baker City Council and the Public Arts Commission would satisfy the community service portion of his sentence and that his concealed weapons permit would be returned to him after the sentencing.

Nilsson said District Attorney Matt Shirtcliff refused to accept the time he spent on City Council and on the Arts Commission and instead issued an order for Nilsson to show why he was not in violation of his probation agreement for not completing his public service requirement.

And Sheriff Ash declined to reinstate his concealed weapons permit, citing Oregon law, which prohibits the sheriff from issuing a permit to a person convicted of any crime for four years.

"I was talked into pleading guilty based on a sham," Nils-

son told Baxter.

At the Nov. 20, 2018, sentencing, Nilsson was placed on a year's probation with a 30-day jail sentence to be suspended upon successful completion of probation. He was fined \$150, ordered to complete 50 hours of community service work and was ordered to forfeit paint and stencils seized in the case.

District Attorney Matt Shirtcliff said he disagreed with "quite a bit" of the claims Nilsson made regarding the plea agreement.

Shirtcliff said Nilsson had a right to a jury trial, although Nilsson told Baxter Monday he was advised against pursuing one.

Baxter explained that he had no authority to make any changes to Nilsson's conviction at this point.

Baxter told Nilsson, who represented himself in Monday's proceedings but who was represented by attorney Philip Wasley of La Grande during the November 2018 sentencing, that the proper way to approach the issue would have been to appeal the conviction. The deadline for that action has passed, Baxter said.

"I know what you are asking for," the judge said. "I don't have the authority to grant it."

Baxter also denied Nilsson's request to order the Sheriff's Department to return the paint and stencils confiscated during the search of his property.

## CELEBRATE

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That event happens Friday, Nov. 1, to observe Dia de los Muertos, or Day of the Dead. This holiday originated in Mexico and Central America as a time to remember loved ones who had passed away.

The Day of the Dead is marked with food, drink, music and parties. According to National Geographic, "On Dia de los Muertos, the dead are also a part of the community, awakened from their eternal sleep to share celebrations with their loved ones."

Baker City's celebration starts at 5:30 p.m. at Baker High School. Guests enter through the west doors near the gymnasium.

Tokens will be sold for \$1 to sample a variety of Latino foods including posole, mole, rice, beans, pico de gallo (Wirth's mother's recipe using cactus), corn tortillas, and arroz con leche (a sweet treat with rice and milk).

"These are all traditional Day of the Dead foods," Wirth said.

Seven dozen tamales will be raffled off during the event.

Music will be provided by a mariachi band from Pasco, and many will be dressed in traditional attire — colorful dresses for the girls, elaborate cowboy outfits for the boys.

A large part of Dia de los Muertos is an ofrenda, which is an altar honoring the deceased with photos, mementos, flowers, and food. The classroom ofrendas created at South Baker will be on display in the hallway, and everyone is welcome to add items to a large community ofrenda to be built during the celebration.

Photo journals featuring portraits and stories of local Latino families will also be

"Our own Latino children are forgetting their heritage. I want them to be proud of it. It's so fulfilling to be reminded of where you come from, to cherish and honor it. My culture is so deep and rich — I'm glad we haven't completely lost it."

— Ma'lena Wirth, ESL liaison, Baker School District

on display in the commons. This project was sponsored by the Ford Family Foundation.

Wirth said the event will wrap up around 8:30 or 9 p.m.

### Creating a Tradition

This is the fourth year that South Baker sixth-graders celebrated Hispanic Heritage Month. It was a project orchestrated by Wirth and former sixth-grade teacher Mandie Rose.

It is a chance, Wirth said, for children to learn about another culture while encouraging Latino students to celebrate their own history.

"Our own Latino children are forgetting their heritage," Wirth said. "I want them to be proud of it and to understand where they come from."

Each Thursday in October featured an assembly for the sixth-grade classes at SBI.

At the first, local youth presented a mock Quinceanera, which celebrates a girl's 15th birthday to honor the transition from girlhood to womanhood.

Students from the advanced art class at Baker High School presented Hispanic-themed art on Oct. 10. These creations will be on display during the Dia de los Muertos celebration.

On Oct. 17, Wirth built an ofrenda and explained the tradition. She added photographs of her mother and father, along with items special to them.

"Think of things your parents love," she said. "These are things important to them. Not you — them."

Ofrendas also include flowers (marigolds are the tradition), food, water, and a source of light.

"We always have light on the ofrenda. My mom and dad's never goes out," she said.

When she was young, she told the students, her family dedicated an entire room to the family ofrenda.

"When I had a rough day, I'd sleep in there," she said. "I could talk to my grandma, my aunts, my uncles."

While there can be elements of sadness, Dia de los Muertos is more of a happy time to remember loved ones.

"It's so fulfilling to be reminded of where you come from, to cherish and honor it," she said. "My culture is so deep and rich — I'm glad we haven't lost it completely."

The Oct. 24 assembly featured traditional dress and the history behind the garments.

For the final assembly on Oct. 31, Latino students will have their faces painted for Dia de los Muertos. This tradition features stark white faces made to look like a skeleton and accented with bright colors. The sixth-graders will also receive a copy of the book "Family Pictures," purchased with a grant from Oregon Humanities.

The Hispanic heritage events were also funded by a grant from the Reser Foundation.

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