

# VETERANS

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Schmitt, 60, served 26 years in the Army as chaplain in the reserves, guard, and active duty and served in different units including the 422 Signal Battalion at Reno, Nevada; 15th Support Battalion 1st Cavalry Division, at Fort Hood, Texas; and the 1st Brigade Stryker, 25th Infantry Division at Fort Lewis, Washington. He deployed overseas five times.

Schmitt thanked those attending and gave a special shout out to Vietnam veterans.

He talked about one of his deployments to Mosul, Iraq, where it was "a little too exciting." His brigade lost 44 soldiers.

"A small number in the terms of those who served in World War Two and Vietnam for a brigade but I can tell you, and as you all know, every life is precious and those men that I served with, they died honorably," Schmitt said. "They died fighting for this country, they died fighting for the men and women that were right next to them."

He told a story about Pfc. Oscar Sanchez, a member of his brigade.

It was in 2005 during the election in Iraq and the insurgency decided Mosul was the place they "were going to discredit the election so they would have to call it."

Schmitt said his brigade killed around 700 insurgents, but "we had some pretty horrific losses ourselves."

"It was a brutal time," he said.

He remembered that on Dec. 29, 2004, his unit established four outposts in Mosul. One of the favorite tactics of the insurgents was to load vehicles with explosives and try to get them onto the American base where they would detonate.

Sanchez and others were on guard duty when a dump truck loaded with 1,500 pounds of explosives was heading for their outposts.

They knew it was a suicide bomber and fired at the cab of the truck behind concrete barriers.

Schmitt said Sanchez knew that if he kept standing so he could fire, he could be killed. But if he dropped behind the barrier he would be protected.

"But in so doing, would allow that dump truck to get closer and closer to that gate, maybe even break through that barrier and get into OP Tampa and kill a bunch of his buddies," Schmitt said. "So what'd he do? He kept firing like American soldiers do. Somebody hit him.



S. John Collins / Baker City Herald

A Baker City homeschool teacher, Tala Yencopal, back row center, said she brought her students to the Veterans Day memorial Monday to help them grasp the "importance to understand our country's foundations and the sacrifices that allow them their freedoms." From left, Luke Hills, Maddie Yencopal, Sadie Yencopal, Jayden Yencopal (back), Zayne Hills and Ethan Hills.

*"Every life is precious and those men that I served with, they died honorably. They died fighting for this country, they died fighting for the men and women that were right next to them."*

— Lt. Col. Perry Schmitt, retired Army chaplain

Dump truck driver, the suicide bomber, he dies. It triggers the mechanism and Sanchez, Pfc. Oscar Sanchez, is killed with the shrapnel. I'll never forget that. Never forget all the men that I've served with and all the men who fell."

Schmitt said his best friend and other friends he made also were killed in the war.

"It's war and every life is precious," he said.

Schmitt gestured to the VFW Memorial and said: "Baker County, you have paid a tremendous price for this country. In blood and in treasure and with the memories of those who have served that never go away, all of your life and I thank you for that and your country is grateful."

Schmitt talked about how much money the U.S. spends to help other countries following wars.

"What country in the history of the world gives money to their defeated enemies?" he said.

The U.S. expended in today's dollars \$5 trillion to rebuild Europe after World War II.

"No country is like this,"

said Schmitt.

He also mentioned 2 million Americans 18 years old and below are adopted from other countries "regardless of gender, color, and nationality."

He closed his speech by saying that all soldiers, sailors, airmen and Marines who come to the end of a long, grueling deployment ask themselves "was it worth it?"

"The answer is yes," Schmitt said. "But you also ask yourself a second thing: Will anybody remember I suffered in this place? Will anybody remember that I saw my friends die in this place? Will anybody remember that...that I will carry terrible memories all my life because of this place?"

He thanked everyone for remembering the fallen and those who served.

"For those who lived and yet carry those terrible memories," Schmitt said.

"And I want to say thank you from the bottom of my heart for the veterans who didn't get to say it to you. Thank you from the bottom of our hearts for remembering to come out to honor veterans on this Veterans Day here in Baker, Oregon."

Schmitt grew up in Southern Idaho and joined the Army on April 1, 1992, at the age of 31.

He had attended college at Northwest Nazarene University in Nampa. He pastored at three churches in Oregon, Utah, and Nevada before he joined the Army.

"It was after a long education period to become

a minister in the Church of the Nazarene that I really felt strongly the call to serve in the military," Schmitt said.

He began in the 422nd Signal Battalion at Reno. He loved it and decided to apply for active duty and was sent to Fort Hood, Texas.

He deployed twice to Kuwait in 1997.

"I thought Texas was hot, but the 120s to 130s was brutal with sand storms," said Schmitt, who has also deployed to Bosnia, Kosovo and Iraq.

His deployment to Iraq as brigade chaplain for the First Brigade 25th Infantry Stryker Brigade Combat Team was difficult, he said.

"It was tough to come back from that," said Schmitt, who has been diagnosed with PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder).

"I worked really hard to try and get my life back," he said.

Schmitt said it took around four years to feel like he was going to live again.

Today, he is retired but works for the Army as a Suicide Prevention Program manager for the 807th Medical Division in Salt Lake City.

He said he can empathize with veterans who are struggling but are reluctant to talk about their troubles.

"Veterans don't like opening up to other people, it's just kind of the nature of the business and it takes a long time to talk to anybody else about it," Schmitt said. "I wouldn't talk to anybody unless they wore the uniform."



Jayson Jacoby / Baker City Herald

Carmen Ott of Best Friends of Baker hopes to find a foster home for Foxy, a Pomeranian abandoned by her owners recently at a local rest area.

# Animal rescue group seeking volunteers

By Jayson Jacoby  
jjacoby@bakercityherald.com

Carmen Ott wants to find a loving home for every dog that comes her way, but sometimes that's not the hardest part.

Just getting the dog can be the bigger challenge.

Ott, a volunteer with Best Friends of Baker, an animal rescue nonprofit, has just that problem now with a pair of dogs that have been seen for the past several days off Highway 30 near Haines.

One is a brindle color boxer type, and the other a black, long-haired border collie. Neither neighbors nor Best Friends volunteers has been able to entice the dogs, and Ott worries the animals won't survive wintry weather.

She said the collie appears to be injured.

Ott said she has been setting out food in the area, hoping the dogs will find it.

The situation is different with Foxy, a female Pomeranian whose owners, who are truck drivers, abandoned the dog at a freeway rest area in Baker County on Oct. 28.

Another truck driver found Foxy and drove her to Baker City, where he handed the dog over to Oregon State Police Trooper Levi Macy.

Macy brought Foxy to Ott, who has been fostering the dog for the past two weeks and is hoping to find a permanent home for the dog, who is about 10 years old and in good health except for some arthritis in her hips.

Foxy is implanted with a microchip, and Ott said she used data from the chip to call the dog's owners. She said they didn't want the dog back.

Macy said he will pursue charges against the owners for animal abandonment. He needs to confirm whether Foxy was left at the rest area in Baker Valley or at Weatherby near Durkee.

Ott said her current efforts to find a home for Foxy, and the struggles to corral the two dogs near Haines, highlight Best Friends' "desperate need for volunteers and members."

More information is available by calling Ott at 541-519-4530.

## LOCAL BRIEFING

### Thanksgiving meals to be distributed November 19 at Safeway grocery in Baker City

Employees from the Baker City Safeway store will distribute Thanksgiving meal packages starting at 10:30 a.m. on Tuesday, Nov. 19 in the east parking lot of the store at 1205 Campbell St.

The meals were bought with donations from customers through the Turkey Bucks program, offered at checkout for the past few weeks.

More than 180 meals will be available on a first-come, first-served basis.

### 4-H Christmas Bazaar scheduled December 6 and 7 at OSU Extension Service

The 4-H Christmas bazaar is set for Friday, Dec. 6, from noon to 5:30 p.m. and Saturday, Dec. 7, from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the OSU Extension Service, 2600 East St. To reserve a table, call 541-523-6418.

## ARREST

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The two couples opened BeeHive Homes of Baker City, an assisted living center, in 2014.

Robert Whitnah said Thamert also had worked as an investigator for the Whitnahs' law office.

Thamert left the business in October 2017 to move to Prineville to work as a building inspector for Crook County.

When he left, Thamert signed his interest in the business over to Krischele Whitnah, Robert Whitnah

said. She later signed her interest over to Robert Whitnah.

Thamert had been the bookkeeper for the business, Robert Whitnah said. Once Thamert left, an audit was conducted in October and November of 2017. That's when it became apparent that money was missing, Whitnah said.

Thamert is accused of taking about \$100,000 from the business, he said.

Because he had considered Thamert his best friend, Whitnah said he had no reason to doubt

that Thamert was taking good care of the business accounts.

Whitnah said the residents of the assisted living center are not victims in the alleged crimes.

Thamert is accused of stealing money from the business accounts.

Visiting judge Erin Landis of Malheur County granted Thamert a conditional release after he was booked at the Baker County Jail Tuesday.

Conditions of his release prohibit him from contacting Robert Whitnah; Jessica Hatfield, secretary

at Whitnah's law office; or Nicole Howerton, administrator at the senior living center, which was renamed Memory Lane Homes about a year ago.

Thamert also was ordered not to enter Whitnah's law office at 1930 First St.; his property on Sparta Lane; or Memory Lane Homes at 3078 Resort St.

Thamert, who is represented by Bend attorney Erick Ward, is scheduled to enter a plea to the charges at 11:30 a.m. Jan. 6 in Baker County Circuit Court.

## Best Friends of Baker Saturday Market

Open EVERY Saturday 8 AM - 2 PM  
DONATE BAGS OF UNOPENED PET FOOD AND GET 10% OFF!

2950 Church St, Baker City (first left after Broadway turns into 10th)

We accept debit, credit, cash & checks!  
Donations accepted Tuesdays, Thursdays & Saturdays 9-1  
(All proceeds benefit the animals of Baker County)



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## HELP NEEDED!

Best Friends of Baker & New Hope have gathered the resources to trap, spay/neuter and vaccinate a colony of feral cats IF we have somewhere to put them afterward. If you have a barn on your property and are willing to provide food & water for a few cats, they will serve as loyal mousers! Please call 541-523-6863  
Working cats need very basic care: shelter and access to food & water in all seasons. They WILL continue to hunt when fed! (Everyone needs fuel to get the job done!)

FOOD DONATIONS NEEDED  
Drop off food donations at Saturday Market Tuesday or Thursday 9-1 or Saturday 8-2 located at 2950 Church Street, Baker City

Save a life and evict those mice!  
Call 541-523-6863  
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