

# Local & State

## TREE

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The tree, now standing in its customary spot in the Court Avenue Plaza between Main and Resort streets, will be illuminated after the Christmas parade on Saturday, Dec. 7.

"I think that is an absolutely amazing thing to happen," Hatch said. "I offered the tree as a community gesture."

When she learned recently that officials from the city and Oregon Trail Electric Cooperative had picked her spruce, Hatch said she was ecstatic.

"I did the happy dance and clapped my hands," she said.

OTEC donated employees' time and the use of its trucks and other equipment to cut the spruce Saturday morning and haul it from Hatch's

*"I offered the tree as a community gesture."*

— **Iliene Hatch, who donated a Sitka spruce as Baker City's Community Christmas Tree**

home at Cliff and Grove streets.

Hatch, who grew up in John Day and moved to Baker City in August, said she only learned by happenstance about the Community Christmas Tree program, which dates to the 1990s.

Hatch, 67, whose mother, Delores (Martin) Stull was born in Baker City in 1928, said she initially called OTEC because she was concerned that the spruce might pose a threat to nearby power lines.

(Delores, who's 90, lives at Klamath Falls.)

Hatch said OTEC officials told her the tree was fine.

But they also alerted her to the Community Christmas Tree program, in which residents offer a tree.

Hatch, who said the spruce's roots had buckled sections of the concrete driveway that leads to her carport, was intrigued.

She decided the tree was too tall for her 100-foot by 100-foot lot — particularly since the property also boasts a blue spruce of similar proportions.

Hatch did have one condition for her donation — she asked OTEC to leave a stump of 12 to 14 feet high.

That will serve as the foundation for a treehouse that Hatch and her husband, Bill, plan to build this spring for granddaughters Kori, 7, and

her sister, Charlie, 13, who live in John Day.

"I have all winter to design it," Hatch said of the treehouse.

She said she spoke with her daughter-in-law Sunday morning to let her granddaughters know when the tree-lighting would happen so they can attend and enjoy the tree that used to stand where their treehouse will be built.

Hatch, who lived at Kuna, Idaho, for 31 years, said she's pleased to be back in her native Eastern Oregon.

Although she grew up in John Day she visited Baker City often, as her aunt and uncle owned a ranch at Weatherby.

Hatch vividly remembers stopping in Baker City to buy a bag of warm cashews.

## FORESTS

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"The underlying intent is to ensure that we can develop plans for the three national forests that would provide the opportunity for durable relationships with our communities and to make an important difference on the landscape for the long term," said Eric Watrud, the forest supervisor on the Umatilla National Forest.

The three forest plans — which together total more than 5,000 pages — contain guidelines for everything from grazing and timber harvest to wilderness protections.

Forest plans are due to be revised every 10 to 15 years to account for changes in the landscape and to keep up with the latest science. The current Blue Mountains forest plans, which were last updated in 1990, remain in effect.

"The 1990 plan is continuing to work, but this is an opportunity to update something that was developed very well, but almost 30 years ago, and to bring that literally into the 21st century," Watrud said.

Watrud said the council includes state and county representatives in Oregon and Washington, four treaty tribes and regulatory agencies, in addition to the Forest Service.

"(The BIC) is specifically just Eastern Oregon counties with the Forest Service co-convening, because we're the ones that work together to

come up with this process, and we're inviting the Washington counties that are affected by the Blue Mountains and government agencies that are affected by the Blue Mountain Plan, said Mark Owens, a Harney County Commissioner and a member of the BIC.

Bill Harvey, chairman of the Baker County Board of Commissioners, said he is "very cautiously optimistic" that the Forest Service's new approach will result in revised forest plans that are "workable" for Eastern Oregon counties.

"There is some great opportunity here," Harvey said. "I hope we don't squander it."

Both Watrud and Owens are hopeful that the BIC will allow for more collaboration between agencies and more input from residents, something they believe was lacking in other drafts of the forest plans.

"(Residents will) actually have more of an opportunity being able to work with their county commissioners because the county commissioners will understand in real-time the plan development and everything will be transparent," Owens said. "The county commissioners can then share that with our constituents. We can take advice from our constituents and we can bring it to the monthly meetings."

Owens said other efforts to get input from governmental

agencies and take public comment from residents seemed to be like a game of "telephone," where once a comment was made and went through the various channels, it was never the same at the end of the process.

"I believe having a forum where we can all work together monthly, review how the plan is being created and designed that we will have an informed consent," Owens said. "We are not going to get consensus on every aspect of the plan, but I think we will end up with a plan that our communities can support and work with."

Watrud said the BIC meetings, which will start in December, are intended to be as inclusive as possible.

"The attempt here is to create just a more open, inclusive approach where the Forest Service is working closely with our communities in order to make sure that we are developing a plan that is gonna stand the test of time," he said. "We have the responsibility of stewarding the management of these three national forests, which are a national and local treasure. And so there's a tremendous amount of interest, and our intent is to make sure that we're incorporating that feedback, incorporating those ideas and local suggestions in order to make sure that we accomplish that goal."

Northwest Regional

Forester Glenn Casamassa announced in March 2019 that the Forest Service was scrapping the proposed Blue Mountains Forest Plan Revision, which includes the Umatilla, Wallowa-Whitman and Malheur. A final draft of the plans had been released in June 2018. It was not the first time the Blue Mountain Forest Plan had been paused.

A draft version of the plans was completed in 2014, and received so much backlash that local forest supervisors decided to develop new plan alternatives.

Owens said after so many stops and starts in developing cohesive forest plans, he's optimistic that this is the time to finally get the process right.

"I believe this is a great opportunity to hopefully redesign how land management plans are done. Figuring out how to include more public participation and more transparency," he said. "I'm excited. I don't feel that this process had been done before and that partnering with the Forest Service and making sure our public voices are heard I believe we'll be successful in having a plan that can meet the social, economic and ecological needs of our communities in the forest."

*George Plaven of the Capital Press, and Jayson Jacoby of the Baker City Herald contributed to this story.*

## HEART TO HEART

### Support available locally to curb compulsive eating

November and December are the months of celebrating holidays with special meals. These feasting times usually have lots of recipes with plenty of calories and sweet desserts.

Enjoying food together can bring happiness, but there are some people who eat constantly and recognize that they have cravings which drive them to over-

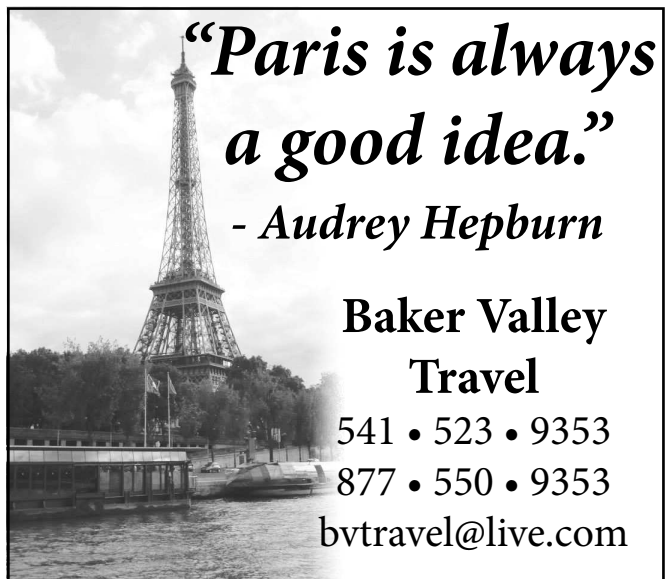
eat. Other people will binge during their meals and then use unhealthy ways to avoid getting overweight. Compulsive eating, bulimia and anorexia are more of a problem than might be recognized.

The members of Overeaters Anonymous have experienced many eating disorders. As they apply the suggested 12-step program, they are able to eat in a healthy way and maintain a healthy weight. During meetings they share how

they are dealing with life without returning to the compulsive food behaviors.

To learn more, use the website OA.org. There are face-to-face meetings and other virtual meetings available. Local meetings are listed in the Baker City Herald's classifieds. For local information call 541-523-5128, or email to [ecapoa@live.com](mailto:ecapoa@live.com)

**Barbara Schimke**  
Baker City



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