

Baker 5J Parent Advisory meeting set

Baker School District parents and community members are invited to a Parent Advisory discussion meeting Thursday evening to review the goals of the Student Investment Account.

The event is set from 6:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. at the District office, 2090 Fourth St.

The presentation will start

with a panel discussion reviewing the district's diverse needs. Staff members Kim Virtue, MaLena Wirth, Karla Macy, Skye Flanagan, Angela Lattin and Barry Nemec will review the current status of various student sectors in Baker schools. Interactive discussion with panel members will follow the panel presentation.

The Student Success Act was passed by Oregon legislators last year. The law gives Oregon schools more money for particular needs. Half of the money goes to Student Investment Accounts.

"One of the main priorities for this new funding is to increase equitable access to program services so that all

students, regardless of where they live, their learning status, or what their background, will experience improved school outcomes," Assistant Superintendent Betty Palmer said in a press release. "We welcome parent engagement around these important decisions involving our schools and programs."

FAMILIES

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"We are here to start a movement, that's what this is about," Potter said.

According to Potter's slide presentation, Oregon has nearly twice as many kids in foster care as the nationwide average. Yet the number of foster homes has declined by 15%, according to the 2018 Child Welfare Data Book.

"A lot of DHS agencies have been understaffed," he said. "Work demand is high. There's a lot of kids needing places, a lot of families to work with and not enough workers."

Potter said some parents have left foster care because they had poor relationships with the supervising agency and did not feel supported.

"That's all changing, there's some great things in place now," he said. "For instance they've hired my position. My position is to support the foster parents we do have and recruit new ones."

Potter said Baker County has 41 kids in foster care, but only 15 foster homes. That makes a ratio of one home per 2.7 kids.

"It's just not enough. We need more foster families desperately," he said.

Some local children are being housed in foster homes outside Baker County.

That's not ideal, Potter said, because it requires kids to move away from their hometown, friends and service providers.

"Also we want to keep that contact between birth family and kids as tight as possible so that they can maintain that relationship," Potter said.

Greg Baxter, who retired



Samantha O'Conner/Baker City Herald

Foster parents Ken and Becky Foster were among the panelists during an event last week in Baker City.

last fall as Baker County Circuit Court judge, talked about the trauma that foster children endure.

"They may see their parents be arrested, they're taken out of the home in some manner, but we know there is trauma," Baxter said. "That's what we want in a foster family — someone who loves them. They want some stability for a period of time in their lives."

Marcus Gillette, co-director of Every Child Oregon, said the organization works to help children and families in Oregon.

The group is working to change the narrative around DHS and the foster care system following recent media reports about state officials sending Oregon children to out-of-state, for-profit facilities.

"This is something that is going to take all of us," Gillette said.

Every Child has different volunteer opportunities for those interested in helping families and foster children.

Josh Erickson is the Baker City interim director for Safe Families for Children, a faith-based organization that works to reduce the need for foster care homes.

"I think that we can do something to lessen that number," Erickson said, referring to the 41 children in Baker County's foster care.

He told a personal story about his grandparents taking in his family to help them after his father left.

"The problem is, there's a lot of families that don't have that extended network," Erickson said. "We are looking and what we look to do is how do we provide extended family to those in our community?"

The idea, he said, is to offer support to families until they can be reunited.

"Because families together is the best thing we can do, it's the best thing for those kids if we can keep them together," Erickson said. "That's what we are here to do. We are here to partner with local congregations, local families,

to volunteer to be a part of this movement."

Safe Families for Children is looking for volunteers to help the host families who would be willing to baby-sit and meet with the parents to help them through a crisis.

"Our goal is to support the foster care system here, our goal is to promote a healthy community through volunteers," Erickson said. "We want to be a support to that. We want to bring that number down, the amount of kids that are in foster care, but we need a strong foster care system too."

Bryce Van Zelf is a regional child placing coordinator for therapeutic foster homes with Greater Oregon Behavioral Health Inc. (GOBHI) of The Dalles.

It works with youth ages 4 to 18 who are identified as having behavioral, emotional, or mental health needs and thus require more intensive coordinated support than what can be provided in traditional foster care.

"Sometimes there's no home for a kid to go so DHS reaches out to us," said Zelf. "Our goal is to stabilize these kids, get them back to permanent placement whether that is guardianship, back to their families, it kind of depends on whatever route that youth is on within the system."

A panel of the speakers and others answered questions from Potter and audience members. The panel consisted of Gillette; foster parents Ken and Becky Foster; Baxter; CASA representative Mary Colard; Megan Spriet, a birth mother of children who had been in foster care; and DHS foster parent certifier Susan Lemon.

GRAD RATE

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Eagle Cap Innovative High School hit a graduation rate of 87.5% for the eight students enrolled in 2018-19, said Betty Palmer, assistant superintendent. The five-year rate, which included 21 students was at 85.71%.

The rate at Baker Web Academy, which serves students throughout the state using a hybrid system that combines online classes with face-to-face teacher contact, showed a 62.5% graduation rate for its 157 students.

Baker Early College, which posted graduation rates of 95.6% last year dropped to 84% for a class size of 125 students in 2018-19, according to the state report and a five-year completer rate of 95.58% for a student group of 116.

Fewer students facing combined disadvantages, such as students with disabilities, low socioeconomic status or those who are homeless, graduate with their four-year cohorts, with rates of 71.67% at BHS; 66.67% at Eagle Cap; 58.65% at Baker Web Academy; and 81.82% at Baker Early College.

Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs continue to boost graduation rates throughout the state, including those of Baker students.

CTE participants at BHS who studied two or three courses graduated at a rate of 87.36% in 2018-19. Those who are considered CTE concentrators because they have enrolled in more than three courses, graduated at a rate of 95.92%.

Statewide, the graduation rate of those considered CTE participants showed an average graduation rate of 88.9% and CTE concentrators gradu-

ated at a rate of 93.5%, according to the state report.

Those statistics are a testimonial to the efforts put forth by the District and the 5J Board to promote career and technical training for Baker School District students, Palmer said.

And that includes the offering of CTE programs for Baker Middle School students, which at this time requires students to be bused to BHS for classes at Baker Technical Institute.

Palmer said the hands-on, real-life application provided in classes such as welding, construction or robotics hold the focus of students who might otherwise lose interest in school.

"CTE classes give kids a why," Palmer said. "Kids who come and don't feel like they can compete academically might realize they have a talent and an ability. It gives them a reason to stick it out."

HEART TO HEART

Acts of kindness appreciated

Once again I say, thanks so much, thank you and a big old thank you to S.C.

for your kindness, heart, and thoughtfulness. Whether you're a secret Santa or a personal angel, you've started my new

year with hope and joy.

Sandie Millhouse
Baker City

Welcome, Dr. Brandon Snow

Baker Dental Group would like to welcome Dr. Brandon Snow to their General Dental practice. Dr. Tod Chandler will be retiring in February and Dr. Brandon Snow will be the new partner with Dr. Justin Bingham. Dr. Chandler would like to sincerely thank all of his patients, staff and friends for many years of enjoyable association. All of us at Baker Dental Group have every confidence in Dr. Snow and are excited to welcome him to the practice.

Brandon was born and raised in Boulder City, Nevada, a small town outside of Las Vegas. After graduating high school, he attended Brigham Young University where he met and married Jill Richards of Baker City. The couple moved to Las Vegas where Brandon completed his formal education at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas School of Dental Medicine in 2016. For the past 3 1/2 years they have been in Fruitland, Idaho while Brandon has worked for Valley Family Health Care in Ontario and Nyssa. They are excited to be moving to Baker City with their family to a community that they love.



LOCAL BRIEFING

School District launches alumni website

The Baker School District has launched a website designed as a gathering place for Baker High School alumni and retired district faculty.

The site is at www.bakerhighalumni.org.

It includes a forum discussion allowing alumni to post updates about reunions, reconnect with fellow graduates, request transcripts and learn about what's happening in the district.

Site features such as a "Media and Press" link will be updated regularly. This link will include school district press releases, electronic versions of the district's Bulldog Pride publication and other school news.

District calendars and activity schedules will be uploaded, and a "Ways to Help" tab will provide information on those who would like to give back time or resources to their alma mater.

Northeast Oregon Compassion Center fundraising banquet scheduled Saturday

The Northeast Oregon Compassion Center's 15th-annual fundraising banquet is set for Saturday, Feb. 1, at 5 p.m. at the Church of the Nazarene Family Life Center, 1250 Hughes Lane.

The Compassion Center provides a variety of free services to people in need in the community.

Tickets are being sold for the tri-tip dinner, which includes four side dishes and dessert. There will also be donation forms and live and silent auctions.

Tickets are \$15 per person, and must be bought in advance at the Family Life Center, the Church of the Nazarene office, or the Harvest Church, 3720 Birch St. A donation of \$200 to the Compassion Center includes two free tickets. Tickets are limited, so people are encouraged to buy early to reserve a seat.

Items available in the silent and live auctions include waterfowl hunting packages from Pre-Dawn Adventures, unique artwork by local artisan Tom Clement, Sweet Wife Baking pies, gift baskets, coupons from local merchants and more.

The guest speaker for the banquet is Karen Bergstrom from the Safe Families For Children movement.

More information is available at [Facebook.com/NortheastOregonCompassionCenter](https://www.facebook.com/NortheastOregonCompassionCenter) and at www.neoregoncompassioncenter.org

Haines Elementary School chili feed Feb. 7

The annual Haines Elementary School Chili Feed and Raffle is scheduled Friday, Feb. 7.

The event, billed as the school's largest fundraiser of the year, will be from 4:30 p.m. to 7 p.m. at the school.

Money raised at the event is used to help pay for technology in classrooms and to support assemblies and field trips that enhance the students' educational experiences, a news release stated.

Items raffled during the evening are donated by local businesses and community partners. To donate, call Chelsea Blatchford, PTCO president, at 541-519-2017.

Tickets are pre-sold by Haines students and also will be available at the door. The cost is \$2 per ticket, three for \$5, seven for \$10, or \$20 for 15 tickets. Winners do not have to be present to collect their prizes.

Dinner tickets are \$5 for adults (11 and older), \$4 for children (ages 4-10), and free to children younger than 3. For more information or to purchase tickets, call Haines Elementary School at 541-524-2400.

Rotary Club looking for group to help

The Baker City Rotary Club has about \$2,000 available to help a local group or organization.

The money could be used in any of six areas:

- Peace and conflict prevention/resolution.
- Disease prevention and treatment.
- Water and sanitation.
- Maternal and child health.
- Basic education and literacy.
- Economic and community development.

Applications are due by Feb. 29, and should be accompanied by an essay of no more than 1,000 words explaining the project and including the following:

1. Which of the six areas of focus would be impacted with our donation to your organization?
2. How can Rotary members be included in the process of using the funds donated?
3. How do you plan to leverage our donation to help you accomplish the most possible? One example might include asking Leo Adler Foundation to match the funds that we donate.
4. What will your specific plans be for the use of the funds?
5. How will this improve our community?
6. What will your organization do to make sure Baker City Rotary Club is recognized within the community for our impact to your project?
7. Would your organization be willing to help Baker City Rotary staff fundraising events within our community if you are awarded this grant?
8. Your contact information.

Applications can be mailed to Baker City Rotary Club, P.O. Box 1011, Baker City, OR 97814.

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