

YOUNG

Continued from Page 1A

Kathie and Greg Pointer started with the Sandefurs, along with Dr. Carl and Barbara Stiff and Matt and Beth Shirtcliff.

"They recruited us," Kathie said. "We had a prayer group for two years before we started."

At the time, the Pointers had small children. Their youngest, Kayley, was 1 when Young Life started. She's now married to James AhHee and the couple drive from La Grande every Monday night to help lead the club.

"It changed our family," Kathie said.

Over the last 20 years, Baker City Young Life has had 54 volunteer leaders and 23 committee member. Seven of those have been involved since the beginning. Also, seven current leaders are former Young Life kids who have returned to volunteer.

Young Life meets Mondays from 7:13 p.m. to 8:13 p.m. at the clubhouse, 2950 Church St. (it is just west of 10th Street near the old railroad depot).

Young Life is for youth in high school. Wyld Life is for middle schoolers, and meets once a month.

The groups follow the school year and meet October to December and February to May.

When Andrews and the other leaders talk about Young Life, they keep coming back to the same word: relationships.

"It's the opportunity to talk to kids. It's about building



Lisa Britton/For the Baker City Herald

Riggin Nedrow, Max Lyon, Zechariah Adams, and Jeremiah Hitzman try to balance in a Y-shaped square. Young Life club meets Monday evenings during the school year.

relationships," Andrews said. "I think we become the people we needed in high school. We're meeting them where they are."

These relationships extend outside of clubhouse walls to coffee or dinner when kids need some extra support.

Although club meetings cease for the summer, those months bring camp time. Throughout the year, Young Life holds fundraisers to help send kids to the Washington Family Camp in Antelope. It was built from the former compound of the Rajneesh religious sect.

In 20 years, an average of 25 kids have attended Young Life camp each summer.

Young Life's biggest fundraiser is a banquet on March 13. It begins at 6 p.m. at Baker High School. The evening includes appetizers, a program, silent auction, and

live auction. The community is invited.

"It will be a celebration, a look back to what we have done in 20 years," Eric Sandefur said.

Andrews said 100% of the banquet's profits provide scholarships to help kids go to camp.

"It takes a huge chunk off," Andrews said.

The next two fundraisers happen in late April.

A two-day yard sale will take place at the Nazarene Church's Family Life Center on April 24 and 25.

The seventh-annual Truffle Shuffle fun run and walk is set for Saturday, April 25. It begins at 9 a.m. with a kids race. To register, visit the website trufflesuffle.itsyourrace.com. The entry fee is \$20, or \$30 for a T-shirt. All participants receive a chocolate medallion from Peterson's



Lisa Britton/For the Baker City Herald

From left, Taylor Gyllenberg, Salissa Chesterman and Hayden Paulsen squeeze together on a square during a game at Young Life club. Taylor Nudd is in the background.

Chocolates.

Proceeds from the yard sale and Truffle Shuffle also help

with camp costs.

Information about Young Life and the club's activities

can be found on the Facebook page and <http://bakercity.younglife.org/>

Baker City will seek longer term from next fire chief

By Chris Collins

ccollins@bakercityherald.com

Fire Chief John Clark was out of town Monday when news of his resignation was made public in a letter he wrote to his staff and posted on the Baker City Fire Department's Facebook page.

Clark and his wife, Gina, were in Oak Harbor, Washington, over the weekend looking for a place to live as he begins the next phase of his career as chief of North Whidbey Island Fire-Rescue.



Clark

The 58-year-old Clark came to Baker in November 2019 with the intension of remaining in the community longer than just a few months past the one-year mark.

Clark said he had looked at the northern Washington area before coming to Baker City, but there were no fire chief job openings. Then recently, the Whidbey Island position opened up. He didn't apply in the first go-round, he said.

But when the pool of candidates

didn't meet the Washington hiring committee's standards, they advertised the position again, raising the salary a bit, and that time, Clark threw his hat in the ring.

Clark said he and his wife had wanted to live in the Puget Sound area when they originally moved West from Lansing, Michigan, where he had served as fire chief of the Delta Township department.

He will earn \$100,000 a year for the Washington job, up from the \$84,300 paid by Baker City. And, although Washington does have a sales tax, there is no income tax and the Washington pension plan is better for someone like Clark who has little time invested in Oregon's Public Employees Retirement System (PERS).

Warner says future plans for hiring a permanent full-time fire chief will be on hold until after the city and county have settled how ambulance services will be delivered to residents living outside the City.

In the interim, Sean Lee, Baker Rural Fire Protection District chief,

began serving as Baker City's part-time interim chief on Wednesday.

Lee knows the Baker City crews, having trained with them over the years, and will be able to provide continuity between the battalion chiefs and lieutenants and firefighters, Warner said.

Samantha Clinkenbeard, part-time administrative assistant, will move to full-time status beginning on March 24. She also will help ensure that the department continues to operate smoothly under Lee's guidance, Warner said.

He had hoped to move her into full time at the fire department this summer but the City couldn't afford it. However, with Lee working just part-time, money became available to extend Clinkenbeard's hours, Warner said.

During the transition, Clark's schedule will be limited after March 12 as he uses up banked time off. He'll work half days on Saturdays and be available as needed during other parts of the weekends through April 4.

Once the ambulance service issue is settled, Warner said he will be looking for someone who would plan to remain as fire chief for at least four to five years. He said he was surprised to learn that Clark, who had said he intended on staying longer, was looking for another position.

Clark himself said the Washington job, salary, benefits and the location were all too good to pass up. "This wasn't planned, but it's a good opportunity," he said.

He acknowledges, however, that he and his wife will miss their Oregon home. "Baker City has been great," he said. "We've made a lot of really, really close friends."

The two other past chiefs also served just a short time before moving on. (Warner said he believes Chief Tom Wills would have remained longer, had it not been for health issues that led to his retirement after a 40-year fire service career).

Wills and former chief Mark John, who Wills replaced, both came to

Baker City from Anaheim, California, and Clark from Michigan.

Prior to hiring those three, Jim Price, a 17-year Baker City Fire Department employee who worked his way up through the ranks, was hired as chief in 2006 and served in the position for eight years before resigning in 2014 to accept a job as chief of the Rogue River Rural Fire District. Traditionally, over the years, the Department has hired from within.

Warner said that in the recent hiring cycles not many candidates from the Northwest have applied for the job.

Once the ambulance issue is settled, Warner said he will work to secure a long-term leader for the Fire Department.

"My goal is to get somebody a little more involved with Eastern Oregon," he said. "When we get done with the county maybe I can find an internal candidate who can work."

"We've got a good bunch of employees there and they need some steady leadership," Warner said.

CONTRACT

Continued from Page 1A

The community of Huntington, population about 435, is about 45 miles south of Baker City and can be reached in about 45 minutes via Interstate 84.

Unity, a town of about 68 people, 48 miles to the southwest of Baker City, can be reached in about an hour and a half over Highway 245 (the narrow and twisting Dooley Mountain Highway).

The county has for now set aside its request for proposals from entities other than the Baker City Fire Department to provide those services. And tentative plans to place a funding measure on the May ballot also has been sidelined, said Jason Yencopal, the county's Emergency Management Director.

The Baker County Board of Commissioners, which is responsible for establishing Ambulance Service Areas and choosing service providers, began preparing for the pending loss of the grant funding last May.

To start the process, the Commission sent letters of interest to 21 potential ambulance service providers.

Four agencies, including the Baker City Fire Department, responded.

Only three, Baker City and two private ambulance services, Med Transport Inc. of North Powder and Metro West Ambulance Inc. of Hillsboro, submitted bids. They have not been made public.

The RFP stated that the minimum 10-year contract was to have been awarded by about June 1 after a series of public meetings to assess community sentiment on the plan.

The county put the brakes on the process late last year.

A letter to Clark from Drew Martin, county counsel, dated Dec. 30, 2019, noted that commissioners had suspended reviewing the proposals for new or different ambulance services for the Baker Ambulance Service Area.

Martin's letter stated that "the Baker County Ambulance Service Area Plan provides that requests for changes and/or new applications shall be presented to the Board of Commissioners for review."

The letter goes on to say that as the current provider, the Baker City Fire Depart-

ment is seeking changes to its agreement to provide services to the Baker Ambulance Service Area (which covers 1,600 square miles, slightly more than half the county).

Martin's letter instructs the Baker City Fire Department, "as the party initiating the process," to provide a written request of the particular changes sought.

Clark responded in a letter to Yencopal dated Jan. 31.

The fire chief stated that a review of past services provided to county residents outside the Baker City limits, but inside the Baker Ambulance Service Area, showed a cost of \$253,368 per year.

"We're revisiting those numbers and based on potential reimbursement from the feds, we likely would reduce that amount," Clark said Friday. "The City wants to provide the service for the County at the best cost we can do it."

The cost of serving Baker City residents is offset by the City's General Fund through property tax collection, resulting in a zero expense to the city, Clark stated.

County Commissioner

Mark Bennett has been representing the Board of Commissioners in discussions with Clark and Warner along with Yencopal and Martin.

Yencopal said discussions are continuing, not only with Baker City, but with residents of the Huntington, Richland, Halfway/Oxbow and Burnt River communities as well, to determine how best to proceed.

Halfway/Oxbow and Richland provide their own volunteer ambulance service in separate Ambulance Service Areas.

Huntington has no ambulance service at this time and service that had been provided by Treasure Valley Paramedics, a private ambulance firm, has been limited, Bennett said. Baker City also is responding to that area as available, he said.

As discussions continue, Baker City Fire Department personnel are scheduled to begin training emergency medical responders in the Huntington area next month to help the community reestablish its own Ambulance Service Area, Bennett said.

Five people have signed

up for the training in the Burnt River-Unity area, which is included in the Baker Ambulance Service Area.

Huntington and Unity responders would be trained to "transport to meet" Baker City ambulances as one way to help the city save money on long-distance ambulance responses outside Baker City, Bennett said.

Another option is an "automatic launch" agreement

with Life Flight to send an air ambulance for transportation from those distant areas, Bennett said.

"A lot of things are under discussion," he said. "We really carefully want to figure out exactly what is needed."

"We have a great service with Baker City Fire. They are supportive of the rural departments with training and resources. Our goal is to put it all together," Bennett said.

Mobile Service Outstanding Computer Repair

**"Fall in love with your
computer, upgrade
to Windows 10"**

**Fast & Reliable
Call or Text 24/7
Dale Bogardus
541-297-5831**

www.outstandingcomputerrepair.com
Refurbished Desktop & Laptops For Sale
House calls (let me come to you!)
Drop Offs & Remote Services are Available

All credit cards accepted