

# City closes playgrounds, skatepark, but other parts of parks remain open

Based on requirements in the executive order that Oregon Gov. Kate Brown issued this week, Baker City has blocked access to playground equipment in city parks, including Geiser-Pollman Park, the city's biggest. Sam-O Swim Center, the skatepark near the swimming pool, and the Lions Club fitness park along the Leo Adler Memorial Parkway near H Street, are also closed as the executive order requires.

The rest of the parks, including the green spaces and picnic tables, remain open so long as visitors comply with the recommended social distancing of at least 6 feet, said Joyce Bornstedt, the city's technical administrative supervisor.



S. John Collins / Baker City Herald

The Lions Club fitness zone along the Leo Adler Memorial Park, near H Street, is closed due the governor's executive order to prevent the spread of coronavirus.

## COPING

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He does enjoy watching informational shows such as the series "How It's Made," and Nielsen said the family has watched some episodes together.  
Anden has been "irritable," but Nielsen said the twins "seem to be just fine."  
Kylar doesn't mind being confined to home, but Kahlan has talked about schoolmates she misses.  
Nielsen said she has tried to buoy her own spirits during a stressful period by reminding herself of how many other parents have also had their lives upended.  
"We're all going through

*"I've always admired teachers, they work so hard. I worry about them during this time, how they're handling things."*

— Mairi Nielsen, who has four children attending Baker schools

the same thing, and I think that's helping me," Nielsen said.  
Although Nielsen has no extended family in Baker City, she said friends, including Sherri and Bill Purcell, have been helping her tremendously.  
Less than two weeks into what amounts to a forced experiment, Nielsen said she

has gained a new level of appreciation for teachers.  
"I've always admired teachers, they work so hard," said Nielsen, who has several teachers in her family, including a sister. "I worry about them during this time, how they're handling things."  
She said all of her kids have enjoyed their teachers this year, which made the sudden curtailment of classes especially disappointing.  
Although Nielsen is pleased with what she's been able to accomplish with her kids so far, she hopes to refine her schedule.  
"I would really like to be able to get more education in our day, but it's just me," she said. "I know we're going

to have a deficit. I'm not a teacher. I'm learning how to do it."  
Nielsen said the uncertainty — wondering whether schools will reopen at the end of April — is stressful.  
"I feel like we're in this weird void, an overall sense of being uncomfortable," she said.  
Nielsen is gratified that the Baker School District has offered free breakfast and lunch during the closure. She said she's either picked up meals every day or enlisted help from a friend.  
"I'm so thankful (the school district) got on it right away," she said. "That was really touching to me, that that was their priority."

## CHURCHES

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Whitford said other church events have been canceled, and the office is open only one day per week, though that could change.  
Whitford said the church is working with volunteers who want to help the community, such as calling on high-risk individuals and people older than 65 who might need assistance during the crisis.  
A volunteer form is posted on the church's website, [www.bakercitychristian.com](http://www.bakercitychristian.com)  
The Harvest Church is also offering live-streamed services only.  
The Harvest Church, 3720 Birch St., is also giving free drive-up meals on Wednesdays from 5:15 p.m. to 6:15 p.m. Volunteers will bring meals to people waiting in their cars.  
"We have a bunch of opportunities for people to volunteer," said Matt Diaz, a team pastor for the Harvest Church.  
Troy Teeter, lead pastor with the Baker City Nazarene Church, said the church is offering online worship services, including music.  
High-risk people who need help with errands can call the Nazarene Church office at 541-523-3533.  
Rev. Ian Wolfe of the First Lutheran Church in Baker City posted a letter on the church's website alerting the congregation that the church has suspended services and other gatherings.

"It is a loving act to not potentially infect those around us, especially many of whom are at high-risk in our congregation," Wolfe wrote.  
Wolfe's March 22 service is available on YouTube through a link on the church's website, [www.firstlutheranbakercity.org/](http://www.firstlutheranbakercity.org/)  
Wolfe said members of the congregation are helping the Baker School District distribute free lunches and breakfasts at South Baker Intermediate School.  
Father Suresh Kumar Telagani said St. Francis de Sales Cathedral has canceled all Masses, including Holy Week and Easter services, and is live-streaming the services. Bishop Liam Cary of the Baker Diocese, based in Bend, will celebrate Sunday Mass each week in English at 9 a.m. This will be streamed through the Diocesan website, <https://dioceseofbaker.org/>. A daily Mass will be streamed at 8:10 a.m. Monday through Friday. The recitation of the Rosary will be live-streamed Monday through Friday at 10 a.m.  
Although the parish office is closed, parishioners and the public can call Dawn Coles at 541-519-7502 or Father Telagani at 541-406-9104 to make an appointment.  
St. Francis has also closed its food bank and opens by appointment only.  
The First Presbyterian Church has canceled Sunday worship at the church for four weeks starting March 22, and links to Facebook Live sermons are on

the church's Facebook Page (First Presbyterian Church of Baker City Oregon).  
The church's office, at 1995 Fourth St., is open with limited hours. The phone number is 541-523-5201.  
United Methodist Church in Baker City is posting updates, and links to online services, on its Facebook page, United Methodist Church Baker City.  
The Rev. Aletha Bonebrake from St. Stephens Episcopal Church in Baker City, in an email to the Herald, wrote that services at the church were canceled from March 8 to April 6, and there will not be an Easter service.  
Bonebrake wrote that although the church doesn't have technology to live-stream services, she has given all parishioners a link to Presiding Bishop Michael Curry's daily thoughts and prayers, and to a Sunday service at St. James Episcopal Church in Lancaster, Pennsylvania.  
"I am setting up the Zoom app for online conferencing so we can continue our Friday morning Bible studies together and everyone is sharing back and forth inspirational articles online they run across in their reading," Bonebrake wrote. "We do no in-person meetings and only visit with our shut-ins by telephone."  
Bonebrake said church members are volunteering with the Baker School District's free meals, and they continue to distribute bread to food banks, and to fill the food pantry outside the church at 2177 First St.

## LOCAL BRIEFING

**Baker School District office remains open, following social distancing**  
The Baker School District office, 2090 Fourth St., remains open to accommodate parents, staff and district residents.  
"We are here to serve students, parents and the community," Superintendent Mark Witty said in a press release Wednesday. "Our desire is to maintain a safe, respectful environment for patrons while complying with the governor's orders."  
District employees are disinfecting surfaces regularly and following the 6-foot distance recommendation.  
People are encouraged to call the office at 541-524-2260 or email [lisa.young@bakernsd.org](mailto:lisa.young@bakernsd.org) to start. If they need a meeting in person they are asked to follow the social distancing guidelines.

**BLM closes campgrounds, boat launches, but trails remain open**  
The BLM has closed developed campgrounds, boat launches and hot springs sites in response to concerns about the spread of the coronavirus. The temporary closure includes Spring Recreation Site on Brownlee Reservoir near Huntington.  
Dispersed camping is still allowed on public land managed by the BLM, and trails at the Oregon Trail Interpretive Center and Virtue Flat OHV area, both east of Baker City, remain open. The Interpretive Center is closed, so access to the trail system is from the Oregon Trail marker on the north side of Highway 86 near Milepost 8, just west of the turnoff to the Interpretive Center.

**Baker School District postpones pre-kindergarten screening**  
Although the Baker School District is prepared for its annual readiness screening of the community's pre-kindergarten children, the process has been put on hold.  
The screening will be postponed in compliance with Gov. Kate Brown's directive for Oregonians to "stay home and stay safe," a District press release states. The annual screening of children who will turn 5 by Sept. 1 was set to begin at area preschools this year on Wednesday, April 1.

"The materials are in. Our screening team is set. We are anxious to see the kids," Assistant Superintendent Betty Palmer, stated in the press release. "However, in order to follow the governor's directive to keep everyone safe, we will postpone the screening until later this spring or early summer."  
Linda Honeywell, the district's pre-kindergarten screening director, has contacted preschool providers to schedule the screenings. Notices were sent to preschool teachers and packets were distributed to parents. The packets included permission slips for screening and parent information forms with information about their child's readiness skills.

The District is asking parents to fill out the forms and permission slips even though the screening has been postponed. The information can be returned to the District Office at 2090 Fourth St. Haines and Keating residents may return their forms to those schools.  
New screening dates will be announced based on the governor's direction on how to proceed.

**Five-part Master Gardener class set to start today postponed due to virus**  
A five-part series of Master Gardener classes scheduled to start this week has been postponed until further notice.  
The first session was set to start today but has been put on hold because of the coronavirus situation, said Mindy Sherrieb, Master Gardener volunteer and class coordinator. More information is available by calling Sherrieb at 541-523-3449 or by leaving a message for her at the Extension Office, 541-523-6418, or by emailing her at: [mastergardener.baker@oregonstate.edu](mailto:mastergardener.baker@oregonstate.edu)

**State pushes back deadline to remove studded tires from April 1 to May 1**  
The Oregon Department of Transportation has delayed the usual deadline for removing studded tires. Vehicle owners in Oregon will not be required to remove studded tires until May 1; the usual deadline is April 1. This change is in response to the current public health emergency from coronavirus.

## GAS

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Oregon, with an average price of \$2.80 per gallon for regular unleaded, down a dime over the past week, ranks as the 4th-highest price among states. Oregon has been in that spot for eight straight weeks.  
The national average is \$2.10.  
Oklahoma has the cheapest gas, with an average of \$1.70 per gallon. A total of 29 states have an average below \$2.  
Hawaii, as it often does,

has the highest average price at \$3.44, followed by California (\$3.17) and Washington (\$2.87).  
Dodds said the main reason that gas prices in West Coast states typically exceed the national average, and often by 50 cents and more, is that there are relatively few fuel refineries in the region (none in Oregon), and the distance to major refining states such as Texas is such that transportation costs boost prices at the pump.  
Another factor, Dodds said, is California law

requiring gas sold in that state contain less carbon to reduce pollution.  
That gas blend is more expensive because only certain refineries produce it, she said, and sometimes other states, including Oregon, end up selling the California-blend fuel.  
Regionally, Baker County's average price of \$2.83 ranks second-highest among Eastern Oregon counties, behind Wallowa County (\$3.02 — the highest price in the state).  
Other average prices among counties:

- Union, \$2.69
  - Malheur, \$2.63
  - Grant, \$2.73
  - Harney, \$2.75
  - Umatilla, \$2.66
  - Morrow, \$2.70
- Thirteen of Oregon's 36 counties have a higher average price than Baker County's. Eleven of those counties are west of the Cascades, including Multnomah, the state's most populous county, which ranks 2nd behind Wallowa County at \$2.98 per gallon.  
Linn County, in the Willamette Valley, has the lowest average at \$2.46.

## Best Friends of Baker Saturday Market

**WE REGRET THAT THE SATURDAY MARKET HAS BEEN FORCED TO CLOSE. FOR ANY QUESTIONS, PLEASE CALL (541) 519-7387**  
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