



In OUTDOORS, 1B

Wolf numbers rising

IN THIS EDITION:

Local • Outdoors & Recreation • TV

\$1.50

QUICK HITS

Good Day Wish To A Subscriber
A special good day to Herald subscribers Ernest and Ivy Nelson of Baker City.

Local, 2A
A Baker City woman who pleaded guilty to criminally negligent homicide in the September 2016 co-sleeping death of her infant son is back in the Baker County Jail on charges of violating the probation terms that were part of her sentence.

BRIEFING

Hells Canyon Dam closed to vehicles parts of next week
Maintenance work at Hells Canyon Dam will prevent vehicles from crossing the dam from 6 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. PDT Tuesday, April 21, through Thursday, April 23. Pedestrians can still cross the dam, although there could be delays as crews use a crane to replace cables and move stop logs, which restrict the amount of water entering the spillgates. There has been relatively little traffic across the dam recently because rafting companies are closed due to the coronavirus pandemic, according to Idaho Power Company, which owns the dam.

WEATHER

Today

64 / 35

Partly sunny

Sunday

63 / 30

Partly sunny

Monday

70 / 35

Partly sunny

Full forecast on the back of the B section.

The space below is for a postage label for issues that are mailed.

Oregon Trail Restaurant Installs Drive-Thru Hoping To Boost Business

Simplified Service



Jayson Jacoby/Baker City Herald

Sandy and Dave McGuire opened a drive-thru window at the Oregon Trail Restaurant on Thursday as they seek new ways to attract customers during the coronavirus pandemic, which led Oregon Gov. Kate Brown to close restaurant dining rooms on March 17.

By Jayson Jacoby
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Sandy McGuire struggled for words to explain the situation to her long-time customer, for whom the Oregon Trail restaurant is something like a second home.

The customer showed up, right on schedule, one morning even after the coronavirus pandemic had closed Oregon restaurants' dining rooms in mid-March.

"It was heartbreaking," Sandy said. "Some of these people only see each other here. They didn't know what was going on."

And customers weren't alone in feeling confused and uncertain over the past month, said Dave McGuire, Sandy's husband. Dave McGuire and Mark Linderman are co-owners of the Oregon Trail restaurant and its adjacent motel of the same name in Baker City.

"A roller coaster," was Dave's description of their recent experiences. "I've never dealt with anything like this before."

That was on Wednesday morning, the day before the Oregon Trail's new

"We've got to do something to build the business back up. At this point I'd try anything."

— Dave McGuire, co-owner, Oregon Trail Motel and Restaurant

drive-thru window, on the west side of the restaurant, opened.

Diners can call in an order and pick it up at the window, or place their order when they arrive.

On Friday morning Dave said the drive-thru's debut was successful. "A lot of people were excited and happy," he said.

Dave said he and his wife decided to hire a contractor to install the window because although the Oregon Trail has offered takeout and delivery meals since restaurant restrictions started on March 17, those options haven't come close to making up for the business lost from the closed dining room — even with help from Elkhorn Taxi to deliver meals.

The restaurant also lost substantial revenue from large banquets and other catering jobs that were canceled.

"We've got to do something to build

the business back up," Dave said. "At this point I'd try anything."

He had to lay off 10 of the restaurant's 14 employees almost immediately after Oregon Gov. Kate Brown issued the executive order on March 17 that closed restaurant dining rooms as well as bars.

Dave said he had many pounds of corned beef ready for the St. Patrick's Day special.

"I had to turn it all into hash," he said with a rueful smile.

Both Dave and Sandy, who have owned the Oregon Trail for 13 years, said laying off their employees was the most difficult part of their adjustment to the pandemic.

That decision, they said, was harder than working 12 to 14 hours every day for a month has been.

And it was harder than turning away customers, most of them senior citizens, who gather most days at the restaurant for the sort of social gathering that is as common at small-town family restaurants as chicken-fried steak and biscuits and gravy.

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Demand grows at food banks

By Samantha O'Conner
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and Jayson Jacoby
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Local food banks have been busy as the coronavirus pandemic forces many businesses to curtail operations or close entirely, and unemployment benefits claims rise rapidly.

Susan Bland, operations supervisor for The Salvation Army in Baker City, said the number of people visiting its food bank has increased significantly.

"It's more than doubled," Bland said. "It was up 30% and within the last week, it has doubled."

The Salvation Army has had to close its thrift store at 2505 Broadway St., and it is no longer accepting donations of clothing and furniture.

The food bank, at the same loca-

tion, is open Monday, Wednesday and Friday from 1:30 p.m. to 4 p.m.

In keeping with social distancing, those who have a car do not have to leave their vehicle to collect food. Bland said many people who pick up a food box arrive on foot or by bicycle, and The Salvation Army has posted blue lines to remind people to maintain a safe distance from one another.

Anyone is welcome.

Bland said The Salvation Army has been serving people who have not visited the food bank before.

"It doesn't matter if they have come to us before," Bland said.

People who are 60 and older can call The Salvation Army at 541-523-5853 the day before to arrange to have a food box delivered.

Local Ranchers Donate More Than A Ton Of Beef

When Dean Defrees learned that hundreds of pounds of beef were languishing in a freezer, he was happy to help ensure the food ended up on Baker County plates.

Defrees, who runs a cattle ranch in Sumpter Valley with his wife, Sharon, and his father, Lyle, is a member of Oregon Country Beef, a marketing cooperative.

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Virus tests take less time

By Jayson Jacoby
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Baker County remains without a confirmed case of coronavirus, and the waiting period for test results is shrinking.

Officials had been waiting an average of 7 or 8 days for test results, but as laboratories speed the process the delay has dropped to about 3 days, said Holly Kerns, a public information officer for Baker County.

This week the county's number of negative tests for the virus has risen by more than 20, to a total of 53 as of Friday afternoon.

Test results from 12 more residents were pending, according to the county's coronavirus website, www.bakercountycorvid19.com.

Kerns said about 10% to 20% of residents who are being evaluated for potential infection are actually being tested.

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County has first remote town hall

By Samantha O'Conner
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Baker County commissioners had their first remote town hall Thursday evening to give residents updates about the coronavirus and to field questions about the pandemic.

Two residents submitted similar questions about whether commissioners have considered asking Gov. Kate Brown to allow counties such as Baker, which had no confirmed virus cases as of Friday, to allow restaurants, bars and other businesses to reopen in some fashion.

Commissioner Mark Bennett said county officials will be discussing that idea, with a deadline of Wednesday to have a proposal.

"We were asked by (state) Representative Mark Owens and (state) Senator Findley that if we could get one done, they would personally push it forward for us," Bennett said.

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