

# School board honors retirees

By Chris Collins  
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The audience was larger than in recent sessions when the Baker School Board met Thursday night, but rather than gathering at City Hall as in pre-COVID-19 days, the crowd appeared by video from their homes, offices, schools and other locations.

Director Kevin Cassidy even made an appearance via Zoom video from Wallowa Lake where he and his family were gathered for a pre-graduation celebration for his son, Kale.

The Board presented glass bowls as tokens of appreciation (to be presented later) to retiring staff members including Betty Palmer, who has served 27 years in the District; Debra Stuchlik, 28 years; David Frazey, 29; Michael Morgan, 5; Cynthia Johansen, 31; Ramona Helgersen, 26; Connie Robinson, 26; Tally Newman, 20; and Alita Arendell, 7.

Board Chair Chris Hawkins assured the retirees that their efforts over the years have been appreciated, even though the coronavirus pandemic required the absence of the usual hugs and in-person congratulations.

"It doesn't diminish our respect and ap-

preciation for everything you have done," he told the group from their various remote locations.

The Board next honored Aiden Rosales, a Brooklyn Primary School student, and Beka Shaw, recently elected BHS student body treasurer, as the "Promise Students of the Month." Mugs and certificates recognizing them as outstanding students also will be presented later.

BHS Principal Greg Mitchell, after first honoring Beka, next recognized one of his teachers, Maggie Banta, who has received an "Inspirational Teacher Award" from Eastern

Oregon University. She was nominated by Corrina Stadler, an EOU freshman and 2019 BHS graduate. In her nomination, Stadler credited Banta, who teaches social studies, with inspiring her to pursue a career in education.

Students and staff from Keating Elementary also spoke enthusiastically about their participation in a project with NASA during the year.

Principal and head teacher Amanda Wilde introduced the student presenters: fifth-graders Hayden Churchfield and Jain Elsner and first-graders Baylee and Blaine Myers.

Wilde and teacher Toni Myers led the students through the presentation to introduce the Board to the NASA RADIOS program.

NASA, of course, is the well-known acronym for the National Aeronautics Space Administration. RADIOS, on the other hand, is a lesser known acronym for Remote and Distance Interactive Online Sessions.

The Keating School, with an enrollment of about 25 students in Grade K-6 this year, was among 14 Oregon schools chosen to participate

in NASA RADIOS this year.

"We already were preparing for what was coming," Wilde said of the experience with remote learning brought to Keating School via livestreaming from Space Center Houston prior to the shutdown because of the coronavirus pandemic.

Students talked about their lessons about the International Space Station, a virtual tour of the Space Center and a study of Mars. To show their appreciation, the Board and school administrators will receive a special thank-you card that includes a Milky Way candy bar and the message "Your Support is Out of This World."

"Thank you to the School Board and all of the administrators who make all of the magic happen at this school," Wilde added from her remote site.

Next, Baker Middle School principal Skye Flanagan was joined by technology staff member Lynde Roberts and teachers Sarah Villarreal, Baker Middle School language arts teacher; Nicole Sullivan, BHS science teacher; and Andrea Belding, a first-grade teacher at Haines for a presentation titled "Technology Upgrade to Meet and Exceed the Challenge of COVID-19."

Flanagan said the technology team has found during the District's distance learning experience required by the coronavirus pandemic, that improvements are needed.

"We really weren't set up tech-wise for something like this to happen," Sullivan told the Board. "Our systems don't sync well."

That should be remedied by next school year, Flanagan and Roberts told the Board. A new system soon to be in place throughout the District will put Baker schools at the forefront of technological advancement, the two men said.

The District will move

to the Schoology learning management system, which provides flexibility for staff and students regardless of whether in-person classes meet in the fall or if distance learning will continue to be required. It also will help provide instruction to students who cannot attend school because of illness or because they are uncomfortable in a larger classroom setting or because their family is away on a vacation, team members said.

Geno Bates, South Baker Intermediate School principal, added his enthusiasm to the new technology system coming to the District.

"It's exciting for my teachers," Bates said. "I think this is going to enhance our teaching. It's at the forefront of education."

Superintendent Mark Witty said Friday that the technological improvements are "a strong, decisive investment primarily paid for through CARES money (federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act)."

The District will spend \$600,000 in 96 classrooms to upgrade systems, add new laptop computers and ensure that all students have access to high quality devices such as Chromebooks for older children and iPads for the younger ones, Witty said.

Teacher training on the new system will begin as soon as possible and will be a focus of the fall in-service training as well, he said.

"This system will really integrate technology," Witty said. "It will be easier for staff to provide high-quality lessons."

"We've never had this level of integration," he added. "I don't know of a district in Oregon that has."

## MEMORIAL

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Army veteran Summer Curry will speak, and Mooney will offer a prayer.

Bugler Duncan Pierce will play taps.

The ceremony will be different from past years due to coronavirus precautions, said Mooney, who served for 14½ years in the U.S. Army.

Although everyone is invited to attend, Mooney said the plan is to limit the size of any single group to 25, to comply with the limit in the state's phase one reopening guidelines. And in each group social distancing will be encouraged.

"We don't want to be huddled into a single group like we may be used to in years past," Mooney wrote in a post on the Veterans Hope Ministries Facebook page. "Smaller groups scattered throughout the cemetery would be a better plan at this point."

Volunteers will be placing large American flags to create the traditional Avenue of Flags in the cemetery on Monday morning starting at 6 a.m. Volunteers are also needed to remove the flags starting at 5 p.m. on Monday. Volunteers can call Doug Riggs at 541-519-7424.

### Veterans Hope Ministries

Mooney said he and his wife, Shellie, have been talking with local veterans for many years, trying to understand what services could help veterans and their families.

He said their ultimate goal is to start a Veterans Hope Center in Baker City where veterans could gather to take part in a variety of activities, including art, woodworking and potentially classes in entrepreneurship and other topics.

Art, in particular, can be an effective therapy for veterans dealing with post-traumatic stress disorder, Mooney said.

He said he has talked with many local veterans who also want to volunteer in the community but aren't sure how to get started. Helping connect those veterans to volunteer opportunities is another of Mooney's goals.

He said he was gratified that several businesses and residents, with just a few days notice, donated money to buy smaller flags that will be placed on veterans' graves at Mount Hope Cemetery today.



Mooney



Palmer



Newman



Helgersen



Arendell



Johansen



Robinson



Stuchlik



Banta



Bates

# Trump calls churches 'essential,' calls on states to reopen this weekend

By Jill Colvin and Deke Miller  
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump said Friday that he has deemed churches and other houses of worship "essential" and called on governors across the country to allow them to reopen this weekend despite the threat of spreading the coronavirus.

"Today I'm identifying houses of worship — churches, synagogues and mosques — as essential places that provide essential services," Trump said during a hastily arranged press conference at the White House, where he didn't take questions. He said if governors don't abide by his request, he will "override" them, though it's unclear what authority he has to do so.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention had prepared a draft of reopening guidelines for churches and other houses of worship weeks ago that included measures like maintaining distance between parishion-

ers and limiting the size of gatherings.

But that guidance had been delayed for more than a month by the administration until Trump abruptly changed course Thursday.

"I said, 'You better put it out.' And they're doing it," Trump said Thursday at a Ford Motor Co. plant repurposed to make ventilators in Michigan. "And they're going to be issuing something today or tomorrow on churches. We've got to get our churches open."

Trump on Friday stressed the importance of churches in many communities and took issue with some of the businesses that had been allowed to reopen.

"Some governors have deemed liquor stores and abortion clinics as essential" but not churches, he said. "It's not right. So I'm correcting this injustice and calling houses of worship essential."

"These are places that hold our society together and keep our people united. The people are demanding to go to church and synagogue, go to their mosque," he said.

## Bentz vs. Spenser for Walden's seat

SALEM (AP) — Alex Spenser has won the Democratic primary in Oregon's 2nd Congressional District race.

Spenser of Klamath Falls will face former state legislator Cliff Bentz, who won the GOP contest. Voters in November will choose a replace-

ment for Rep. Greg Walden, the Republican who didn't run for a 12th term in the conservative region covering the rural eastern and central part of the state.

Bentz will have the advantage in the fall in the predominantly Republican part of the state.

Spenser won a close race among four other Democrats vying for the 2nd District Democratic nomination.

The 2nd is the only Oregon U.S. House District represented by a Republican. Oregon's four Democratic U.S. House members all won their primaries.

## Flood damage closes forest roads

Due to flood damage, the 5110 road on the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest southwest of La Grande is closed at the junction of the 51 road.

Repairs were underway Friday but there is no estimated reopening date. Travelers should avoid the area.

Flood damage also prompted the closure of Road 54 on the Umatilla National Forest

about 14 miles southeast of Pilot Rock.

The road, also known as Pearson Creek Road, washed out in several places during heavy rain earlier this week.

Other roads with flood damage include Road 10 between Dale and Olive Lake, and side roads off Road 53 between Ukiah and Heppner, particularly the Sugarbowl Creek area (Roads 5308 and 5309).

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