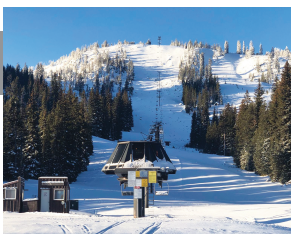


Baker City Herald

October 10, 2020

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In **OUTDOORS, 1B**
Ski area's plans for season

IN THIS EDITION:

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QUICK HITS

Good Day Wish To A Subscriber

A special good day to Herald subscriber Lynda Masterson of Baker City.

BRIEFING

Baker County Health Department plans drive-thru flu shot clinic Oct. 16 at Baker High

The Baker County Health Department will have a drive-thru flu shot clinic on Friday, Oct. 16, from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. at Baker High School in the student parking lot, between the school and football stadium, 2500 E St.

Flu vaccine is available to all people 6 months and older. Alicia Hills, nursing supervisor at the Health Department, encourages everyone to get a flu shot this season.

Flu vaccine costs \$38 (available for age 6 months and older) for the regular vaccine and \$73.50 for high dose (available for age 65 and older).

Bring your insurance card. More information is available by calling the Health Department at 541-523-8211.

WEATHER

Today

57 / 36



Rain showers likely

Sunday

57 / 42



Scattered rain showers

Monday

61 / 34



Mostly cloudy with showers

Full forecast on the back of the B section.

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

Program Offers Free Preschool For Many Local Families

Preschool Promise



Lisa Britton/For the Baker City Herald

Ezra Diamond, left, builds with magnetic blocks while Rhonan Gibson plays nearby during free time at Miss Melissa's Preschool. The preschool, along with Head Start, received Preschool Promise funds to offer tuition-free spots to families who qualify under the income guidelines.

By Lisa Britton

For the Baker City Herald

Melissa Shafer turns a page and continues with the well-known story of "I knew an old lady who swallowed a fly."

"She swallowed a ... cow!" Shafer says, then looks at the youngsters sitting on the carpet nearby. "Could you swallow a cow?"

"I could!" Rhonan Gibson, 4, says, bouncing a bit on his pillow.

Soon the story is over. Maybe.

"Again! Let's do that one again!" Ezra Diamond, 3, says as he jumps up and down.

This is a typical scene inside Miss Melissa's Preschool, where Shafer uses a modified Montessori approach of play-based learning.

"I'm a believer in that kids are little scientists," she said.

Today she has just two children, but she hopes that changes soon thanks to a Preschool Promise grant she received from the state.

Preschool Promise was developed to help families access preschool programs. The state program provides free preschool for those with income that is 200% or less of federal poverty guidelines. For a family of four, the maximum income limit is \$52,400. For a family of six, the limit is \$70,320.

Preschool Promise is about options,

"Preschool Promise really is about trying to meet all families' needs and level the playing field for all children coming into kindergarten."

— Theresa Martinez, Child Care Resource & Referral

said Theresa Martinez, who is transitioning from Early Learning Hub coordinator to the director of Child Care Resource & Referral. She helps families enroll in Preschool Promise.

"Preschool Promise really is about trying to meet all families' needs and level the playing field for all children coming into kindergarten," she said.

Preschool Promise is in its fourth year, but in 2020 it expanded to offer more slots for eligible families. It includes a variety of settings — centers, homes, and schools — that offer options for availability.

"Some parents need longer care," Martinez said. "That's where home programs are an option."

Preschool Promise programs are required to provide 900 hours per year.

And that time, Martinez said, must include "developmentally appropriate activities."

This year, Baker City was allotted 8 spots at Miss Melissa's Preschool, 6 at Masterminds (which is full and

already participated in the Preschool Promise program), and 35 with Head Start.

The typical day at Miss Melissa's Preschool is from 8 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., although she can extend to 5 p.m. if needed.

Her preschool is in a small building near downtown Baker City. The approach is play-based, which includes free play time with a rotating collection of toys, center space for activities, and a room for storytime and crafts.

She incorporates outside activities as much as possible.

Shafer usually advertises her preschool on Facebook, but had to delay this year while awaiting Preschool Promise paperwork.

To learn more about Miss Melissa's Preschool, check Facebook or her website, missmelissapreschool.com.

To apply for Preschool Promise, call Martinez at 541-473-4822 or email theresa.martinez@malesd.org.

Head Start

Although Head Start is already in session, the program still has space for students. Later this month, Head Start will transition to the Baker Early Learning Center (BELC) at 2725 Seventh St., and resume classes in early November.

See **Preschool**/Page 3A

Virus rate rises

By Jayson Jacoby

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An increase this week in new COVID-19 cases in Baker County could jeopardize the Baker School District's plan to return elementary students to in-person classes on Oct. 14.

With two new cases reported Friday, the county has reported eight cases since Sunday, Oct. 4. That's the highest weekly total since the week starting Aug. 30, when there were 13 new cases. Most of those 13 cases were from Meadowbrook Place assisted living facility, the site of the county's only outbreak. That outbreak, which totaled 27 cases, has been controlled.

See **COVID-19**/Page 2A

Fugitive arrested after he claimed snakebite

By Chris Collins

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An Idaho fugitive who reported about 7 p.m. Thursday that he was lost in the Hells Canyon area summoned law enforcement officers to his rescue after claiming that he had been bitten by a rattlesnake.



Henry

Ryan Paul Henry, 33, of Kuna, Idaho, was found, with no signs or symptoms of a rattlesnake bite, about 10 p.m. Thursday and was in custody Friday in the Baker County Jail where he was being held on an Idaho parole violation warrant.

See **Fugitive**/Page 2A

Baker Technical Institute Will Create Online Hub Linked To Regional Hospitals

BTI receives grant for medical training

By Chris Collins

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A \$147,203 federal grant will help Baker Technical Institute provide improved distance education training to students interested in pursuing health care careers in remote areas of the region in the months ahead.

John Huffman, state director of the U.S. Department of Agriculture Rural Development, announced the award Wednesday in a press release.

"With the vast geographic distances in this part of the state, it is

not always feasible for rural residents to travel to attend classes," Huffman stated. "This investment will give those who want to begin a career in health care the ability to access classes remotely, increasing the job opportunities available to them."

Doug Dalton, BTI president, said the organization applied for the grant funding prior to in-person classes being shut down because of the COVID-19 pandemic last spring.

"Now distance learning is in the spotlight ... throughout the world,

really," he said.

The USDA funding, and an additional \$22,075 contribution from the Baker School District, will be used to provide state-of-the-art technology to train students not only in Baker City, but also in communities in Grant, Harney, Morrow and Wallowa counties.

BTI, which has been housed in the northwest wing of Baker High School since it was established in 2014, is the hub site for the health care training. Community hospitals in the region — Blue Mountain Hospital in John Day, Harney District Hospital in Burns,

Morrow County Health District in Heppner and Wallowa Memorial Hospital in Enterprise — will serve as end-user sites for the program.

In most cases, students, for whom Chromebooks will be provided, can study from their homes. Those who don't have reliable internet service, would be able to visit the hospital in their area and access the internet at that site, said Tonia Springer, BTI program coordinator. The Chromebooks will be rotated through students at each site.

See **Training**/Page 3A



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TUESDAY — UPDATE ON ORPHEUM THEATER RENOVATION PROJECT