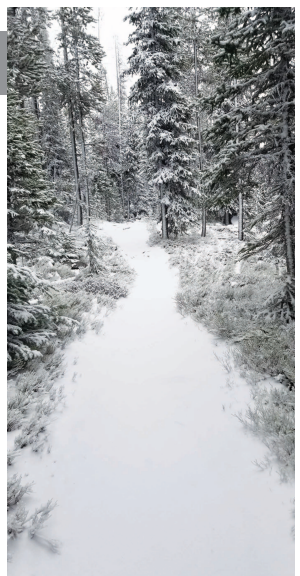


Baker City Herald

October 17, 2020

Serving Baker County since 1870 • bakercityherald.com



IN THIS EDITION: Local • Health & Fitness • Outdoors • TV **\$1.50**

QUICK HITS

Good Day Wish To A Subscriber

A special good day to Herald subscriber Mary Stearns of Baker City.

BRIEFING

Baker City ends burning ban

The Baker City Fire Department has ended the ban on outdoor burning, including burn barrels.

Senior needs plan to be presented

Community Connection of Northeast Oregon Inc. will have a public hearing (Zoom and phone) to present the results of its Senior Needs Assessment for the Area Plan on Monday, Oct. 19, at 1 p.m. To access the meeting on Zoom, go to www.ccnor.org/publicmeeting for the link.

The Area Plan is an overview of senior services that Community Connection provides and the service delivery systems for the next four years. Community members are encouraged to attend.

Fair board to meet Tuesday, Oct. 20

The Baker County Fair Board will have its monthly meeting on Tuesday, Oct. 20, at 6 p.m. at the Fair office, 2600 East St. Social distancing will be followed.

WEATHER

Today
63 / 34

Mostly sunny

Sunday
60 / 40

A few showers

Monday
66 / 35

Mostly cloudy

Full forecast on the back of the B section.

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

1 new virus case this week

By Jayson Jacoby
jjacoby@bakercityherald.com

Baker County's COVID-19 roller-coaster continued this week.

Although this ride more resembles the modest sort you'd find at a county fair than a stomach-churning monstrosity at Six Flags.

Following a week in which the county recorded 10 new coronavirus cases, the highest weekly total in a month, the county has had only one new case for the week starting Oct. 11. That case was reported Friday, and it came after 6 straight days without a case.

That's the longest period without a new case since late June.

The previous week's total of 10 new cases followed soon after another quiet stretch. The county had just one new case from Sept. 12-21.

Nancy Staten, director of the Baker County Health Department,

said she can't explain the ebbs and flows of weekly cases over the past month or so. But she's optimistic that this past week's absence of cases reflects county residents taking precautions such as avoiding large social gatherings.

See **Virus**/Page 6A

Baker School District Officials Celebrate Return Of In-Person Elementary Classes



Keating Elementary School photo

Keating Elementary students Clara Jonas, front, and background, left to right, Freya Giff, Nathan Cook and Gage Clark returned to their classroom in the school east of Baker City on Wednesday.

'Most Fun Thing'

By Chris Collins
ccollins@bakercityherald.com

A review of the first 2 days of in-person classes for Baker School District elementary students brought celebratory exclamations from School Board members, administrators and teachers Thursday night.

Students in preschool through sixth grade returned to their teachers, classmates and school buildings on Wednesday and Thursday. And kindergartners were welcomed to newly remodeled classrooms at the Baker Early Learning Center, at the site of the former North Baker School Building.

Superintendent Mark Witty admitted he had to step out of a classroom during his tour of the District on opening day because he was tearing up at the sight of the children returning to school.

"I take my hat off to every single staff member. This has been an amazing challenge of organization and structure."

— **Mark Witty, superintendent, Baker School District**



"This is the most fun thing I've done in 6 months," Witty said in his report to the Board Thursday night. "I take my hat off to every single staff member. This has been an amazing challenge of organization and structure."

On Wednesday, Witty visited Brooklyn Primary School, which serves Grades 1-3; South Baker Intermediate School, Grades 4-6; Haines School, preschool through Grade 6; Keating School, preschool through Grade 6 (no third-graders are enrolled at the 20-student school at this time); Eagle Cap Junior and

Senior High School; and the Baker Early Learning Center.

As part of the celebration during the Board meeting, two elementary school students, Hayden Churchfield of Keating and Fidel Ochoa of South Baker Intermediate, were honored from their homes as the District's "Promise Students of the Month" during the livestreamed meeting. They were honored by their teachers and principals for their dedication to learning and for serving as positive role models for other students.

See **Schools**/Page 3A

Record number of ballots mailed

By Jayson Jacoby
jjacoby@bakercityherald.com

Stefanie Kirby had to use a bit more muscle than is normally necessary to amass the ballots delivered this week to Baker County voters for the Nov. 3 election.

Kirby, the county's clerk and election official, said 12,249 ballots went to the post office on Wednesday.

That's by a substantial margin the most voters who have been eligible in any presidential election in Baker County's 158-year history.

The previous record, set in the 2016 election, was 11,164.

Kirby said the past few weeks have been hectic in the clerk's office at the Courthouse as employees deal with an influx of newly registered voters.

The deadline to register for the Nov. 3 election was Tuesday, Oct. 13.

"We've been very busy," Kirby said on Thursday.

Baker County's tally of registered voters has added more than 250 names since summer.

There were 11,995 registered voters in the county in July, according to the Oregon Elections Division.

The county's population is about 16,800.

The increase in registered voters has been driven in part by Oregon's "motor voter" law, which took effect Jan. 1, 2016.

The law requires the state to mail a notice to people who are eligible to vote, but who aren't registered, after they visit a DMV to apply for or renew their driver's license.

People who receive the notice have 21 days to respond.

See **Ballots**/Page 3A

Farmers Market finishes season

By Lisa Britton
For the Baker City Herald

Shaletta Baldwin wasn't sure what to expect this year for the Baker City Farmers Market, but she ended the season, on Oct. 14, pleasantly surprised.

"The market season went surprisingly well," she said. "It definitely started a little shaky with COVID-19."

Baldwin is the market manager for both the Baker City Farmers Market, and the La Grande Farmers Market.

See **Market**/Page 6A

CITY COUNCILORS BALK AT EXCESSIVE FORCE POLICY

Police policy required for grants

By Chris Collins
ccollins@bakercityherald.com

The excessive force policy the Baker City Council has been asked to approve to allow New Directions Northwest to receive a \$1 million grant to build a Wellness Center is a routine part of awarding federal Community Development Block Grants.

Nathan Buehler, a spokesman for Business Oregon, the agency that administers

the program in Oregon, said Thursday the Baker City Council can agree not to approve the policy, but in doing so, New Directions would not receive the \$1 million funding for its project.

"It's not an Oregon thing, it's not a Business Oregon thing and it's not a new thing," he said. "We don't have the ability to waive the federal requirement."

The current environment

in Oregon, which has included Black Lives Matter demonstrations and protests over the past five months, might account for a few more questions being asked about the policy that has been in place since 1990, Buehler said.

He has not heard of any city in Oregon refusing to adopt such a policy and thereby refusing grant dollars.

See **Police**/Page 3A



TODAY
Issue 68, 14 pages

Classified..... 4B-6B
Comics..... 7B
Community News..... 3A

Crossword..... 4B & 6B
Dear Abby..... 8B
Horoscope..... 6B

Jayson Jacoby..... 4A
News of Record..... 3A
Obituaries..... 2A

Opinion..... 4A
Outdoors..... 1B & 3B
Senior Menus..... 4A

Sports..... 5A & 6A
Turning Backs..... 2A
Weather..... 8B

TUESDAY — BAKER FOOTBALL, VOLLEYBALL COACHES TALK PRACTICE