LIMITS

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The new 50-person limit during the pause almost cuts in half the pub's capacity, Brown said, because he will need at least six employees, leaving his customer capacity at 44.

He said he will have to lay off one server and one cook while the 50-person limit is in effect.

The limit not only affects how many diners can be seated, Brown said, but it also means he can't allow groups to wait for an open booth if the restaurant is at or near the 50-person limit.

He said his servers will need to keep track of the number of diners, and when the total nears 40 the staff will need to post a sign on the door.

"We'll see what happens tonight," Brown said on Wednesday morning as he anticipated the first day of business under the 50-person limit.

Brown doesn't expect people will wait long for a table, if at all, while a chill wind is blowing snow flurries down Main Street.

Nor is outdoor dining an option in Baker City this late in the year, he said.

Brown chuckles ruefully when he reads, in a state press release announcing the 2-week pause, that restaurants are encouraged to promote outdoor dining.

Jayson Jacoby/Baker City Herald

Barley Brown's Brew Pub owner Tyler Brown thinks the state is unfairly punishing restaurant and bar owners with restrictions during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Barley Brown's increased its outdoor seating during the summer by setting up tables on the Resort Street side of the building.

"I think we were doing about 65% of our normal sales, even with outside seating," Brown said.

The dining tables on a patio beside the Powder River outside the Golden Crown restaurant on Campbell Street are also closed for the winter, said Ramona Webb, the restaurant's manager.

Webb said the 50-person limit will probably force the staff to turn away diners, as the restaurant can accommodate around 100 customers.

She hopes an increase in takeout orders will at least partially make up for the loss of people dining inside.

"We have a lot of loyal customers," Webb said.

Brown said the new restrictions during the 2-week pause frustrate him because he feels that state officials have limited restaurants more than other businesses such as grocery stores.

"It makes zero sense to me," he said.

Brown said he enforces mask requirements and distancing, and workers frequently sanitize surfaces. He also noted that restaurants are required to have robust ventilation and air filters.

Moreover, Brown pointed out that the governor, along with health officials both at the state and county level, cite private social gatherings such as birthday and dinner parties as the main source of the significant surge in COVID-19 cases.

"No one is saying we're the problem," he said, talking about the restaurant industry in general.

Kari Raffety, co-owner of The Main Event Sports Bar and Eatery on Main Street, is similarly frustrated.

"I don't think (the virus) is spreading in restaurants," Raffety said. "But they keep chipping away (at restaurant capacity). It's not good for business. It makes it really hard."

During Wednesday's lunch rush, the first with the new 50-person limit, Raffety said she and her three co-workers didn't have to turn away any customers, but some had to wait outside to ensure there were no more than 50 people inside.

Raffety said that based on what she's seen at her restaurant the past couple of months, when she had 75 seats as well as up to 10 available upstairs, the 50-person limit will definitely cut into her clientele.

Where will people go instead?

Brown said people still want to get together for meals regardless of whether their favorite restaurant has seats available. He wonders whether the state, by further limiting residents' restaurant options during the 2-week pause, might unintentionally be encouraging people to put themselves at greater risk for contracting, and spreading, the virus.

"How much are we pushing people to having these social gatherings?" Brown said.

During the pause, state officials are also asking people to limit social gatherings to people in their own household, to have fewer such gatherings, and to have no more than six people attending if the group includes people from outside the household.

But Brown points out that the state can't enforce those recommendations.

For restaurants, on the other hand, the Oregon Liquor Control Commission is tasked with enforcing COVID-19 mandates.

At El Erradero restaurant in Baker City, the new limits will have an effect, said Maria Arceo, whose father Roberto owns the business.

Maria Arceo said the restaurant, at Broadway and Second streets, is relatively large, so the limit of 50 people, including staff, is a significant reduction in the potential capacity.

She said business has been slow the past 2 weeks, and she hopes El Erradero doesn't have to return to takeout orders only, as was the case early in the pandemic.

Arceo said she's already anticipating that she won't be able to host the usual contingent of holiday parties, some of which can bring 30 to 40 people to the restaurant.

VIRUS

Continued from Page 1A

The county's rate of new cases has slowed over the past 5 days. From Nov. 7-11 there were 18 new cases, compared with 37 cases for the previous 5-day period, Nov. 2-6.

Since the pandemic started the county has reported 198 cases — 145 positive tests and 53 "presumptive" cases, those involving people who had symptoms and were in close contact with someone who tested positive, but who haven't tested positive themselves.

Students' Halloween stories awarded

Three Baker City seventh-graders were winners in a Halloween story contest sponsored by 4-H.

The contest was a competition pitting students ages 8 to 18 from Baker County against students in Marion County, said Katie Hauser, 4-H program coordinator at the Oregon State University Extension Service in Baker City.

Caedmon Myers won first place for his story, "The Darkness." Myers also placed third for the story "IT: The IT Had a Child And It's Me."

Ashlyn Child placed second with the story "My Last Trip."

The winning stories start below and continue on Page 5A.

'The Darkness,' by Caedmon Myers

In the year 2024, I went to explore Pearl Harbor. It was interesting but I heard weird voices coming from the ship. Well at least I thought I did. I thought I heard screaming and pain. It is December 7th 2024 my name is Sully and if you're reading this it's too late. I'm dead, bothered by a dark force that I shouldn't have bothered. It is coming for me and I'm doomed for eternity. Well here's the story, might as well tell people how I died.

Here we go, it was December 1st 2024, I decided to go explore Pearl Harbor. I was at Oahu, a nice place surprisingly warm in the winter, so anyway I decided to go explore Pearl Harbor but I heard screaming and sounds of pain it seemed almost real I thought.

It was ear piercing, it sounded like something not of this world, something different, something unexplainable. While I was going around the ship I saw scratch marks, the waters were murky so I was not sure, I thought it was rocks or pieces of land that did that, but no it was not land or rocks or something else that I just dismissed. Well after a nice swim and sightseeing I went to my apartment, it looked amazing but most importantly it was right by Pearl Harbor, so every day I would go down there and see it in all its beauty. But every day I went there the screaming got louder and I saw more scratch marks. This time I was super suspicious about those marks and where they were coming from but that was an adventure for another day I thought. Then one night when I was going to sleep I heard the screaming louder. This time I knew it was real. I thought it was just the water, but no there is something or someone in the ship. I have to check it out.

I get on my scuba gear on and started diving when I was almost there when something let out a big screech that was so loud and high that I almost passed out but I kept going. Then when I got to the wreckage I found a way inside then when I got inside the weirdest thing happened, there was no water in there so I hit the metal with a loud THUNG!! Then there was silence. I moved forward, threw open a door and kept walking. When I got to the sound of the screaming there I saw bodies chained up some on the floor and skeletons hanging from the ceiling. It looked like they were beaten and bruised and scratched up and even bitten. Then one of them turned their head and looked at me and said "run" then out of nowhere a dark figure bolted out of the shadows and cut my arm open and almost took it all off but thanks to the suit it was just a big scratch.

I turned around and ran out the door into the water and swam all the way to my apartment. I did not know how I lived but I made it to my apartment and hid. Now we are back to the present day. Every day I go to sleep I see the monster outside my window and every day he is closer one day I fear he will be right at my bed waiting to strike. I am suffering but it is too late. Goodbye world.

'My Last Trip,' by Ashlyn Child

I was going on an adventure of a lifetime to Mars with 9 other people chosen. Little did anyone know exactly what was going to happen when we got on the ship.

I was sitting on my couch, when my phone started to ring. I didn't know who it was, so I ignored it. After a while it started to ring again; it kept ringing so I finally answered ... someone on the other line started talking saying, "Hello is this Julie?"

"This is Julie," I replied.

"Hi this is Nikkie from NASA, we saw your application, how would you like to be one of the first people on Jupiter?"

"YES! I would love to!" I exclaimed.

"Great, we need you to come down the 21st for launch."

When she hung up I jumped up and screamed. I WAS GOING TO SPACE!!!! I immediately went to my room to pack. But again my phone rang. When I answered it, my friend had called and was screaming saying how he was going to space. (We had signed up together.) When I hung up for the second time, I hurriedly finished packing. It took 5 hours, but I finished.

On the 21st I left, and it was nerve wracking. I kept thinking about things that could go wrong, but in the end John helped me. When we got on board I met 8 other people, they were Cassy, James, Ava, Leo, Grace, Adam, Ane, and Luke. Everyone was buzzing with excitement and talking to each other saying what they were going to do. Except for James, he kept to himself.

See **Ashlyn**/*Page 5A*

Police called to 19 incidents involving one transient

■ Police cite Gregory Rex Stephens for trespassing four times in one day

By Chris Collins
ccollins@bakercityherald.com

A man who apparently arrived in Baker City during the unseasonably warm days of early November has kept police busy as he has moved to various businesses, possibly seeking shelter as the temperatures continue to drop and snow falls.

Police Chief Ray Duman said his officers had their first contact with Gregory Rex Stephens, 74, at 10:27 a.m. Tuesday when he was trespassed from York's at 1549 Campbell St.

Duman said Stephens is apparently a transient who came to Baker City from Enterprise. Police have been called to 19 separate incidents, 15 of which were reports that Stephens refused to leave businesses after he was asked to move on, in the first seven days of his arrival in the community.

(Stephens was cited on charges of criminal trespassing three more times on Tuesday, twice at the Baker Truck Corral about 10 p.m. and once at the Baker Tower at 9:53 p.m.)

Because of the coronavirus pandemic, Baker County Sheriff Travis Ash has put a cap on the number of people accepted in custody at the Baker County Jail at about 20.

Those spaces are reserved for people accused of more serious felony crimes and people arrested on crimes that require mandatory arrest under state law, such as domestic violence offenses.

Still others are housed at the jail serving sentences based on Baker County convictions.

See **Transient**/*Page 6A*

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