

DONATIONS

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Although the Elks were eager to satisfy the increased demand, Brinton said the Baker Lodge’s budget, which is usually set in January, fell short.

She said the Elks set aside about \$2,500 for this year’s Christmas food boxes. That figure was based on a slight increase from the 60 or so boxes the Lodge delivered in 2019.

But the budget wasn’t the only problem, Brinton said.

The Elks Lodge also missed many of its fundraising chances this year since the Lodge was closed, due to COVID-19 restrictions, much of the time.

Brinton said the Lodge was about \$2,000 short of what it needed for the Christmas boxes.

“When you’re a nonprofit that’s a lot of money,” she said.

But Lodge members have already donated more than half of the shortfall, and Brinton said Grocery Outlet, Safeway and Rite Aid donated food. ALOTT Bargains in Baker City donated toys. Brinton said Valerie Duncan, who owns the variety store, is an Elks member.

“We’re just very grateful that we have members who are able to donate,” Brinton said.

On Friday, Dec. 18, Elks members gathered at the Lodge to organize the Christmas box assembly and delivery schedules. The contents of each box was based on the number of people in the family, and whether there were children. Items included traditional holiday fare such as turkeys, stuffing, ham, potatoes and rolls. The largest boxes weighed



Contributed Photo

Boxes delivered by the Baker Elks Lodge included all the fixings for a Christmas dinner, including turkey, ham, stuffing and rolls.

“We’re just very grateful that we have members who are able to donate.”

— Morgan Brinton, public relations chairperson, Baker Elks Lodge

about 60 pounds, Brinton said.

On Saturday, Dec. 19, about 30 volunteers prepared the boxes, and half a dozen drivers delivered them, wrapping up around 4 p.m. that day.

The Salvation Army

The Salvation Army in Baker City, in conjunction with the Baker City Fire Department and Baker Rural Fire Protection District, delivered 78 food boxes on Saturday, Dec. 19.

That’s actually fewer boxes than the more than 100 that were delivered in 2019, said Holli Diamond, The Salvation Army’s Eastern Oregon



Contributed Photo

Families with children received toys along with food in their Christmas boxes.

field and service center director.

Diamond said she’s not sure whether the number of boxes dropped this year because more people received a box from a different source, such as the Elks.

“The need is definitely there,” she said.

In addition to the food boxes, The Salvation Army will deliver toys donated through the Angel Trees on Thursday.

Diamond said The Salvation Army will also deliver premade dinners on Wednesday, provided by Safeway through customer donations.

DINING

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Baker County has been in that category since Dec. 3 and will remain at that level through at least Dec. 31. McGuire said on Wednesday morning, Dec. 23, that he feels he has “been backed into a corner” by the restaurant restrictions.

He said the prospect of laying off employees before Christmas was “excruciating,” especially considering he had to temporarily lay off most of his employees in March after Gov. Kate Brown issued an executive order banning indoor dining at restaurants.

That restriction was eased later in the spring, replaced by occupancy limits for restaurants, until the current restrictions, based on each county’s risk level, took effect Dec. 3.

McGuire had a conversation Tuesday evening with Fred Warner Jr., Baker City manager, who came to the restaurant.

Warner said Baker County has received several reports about indoor dining at the Oregon Trail restaurant.

Oregon OSHA has received five complaints about Oregon Trail restaurant, said Mark Peterson, communications officer for the Oregon Department of Consumer and Business Services.

“I volunteered to talk to Dave,” Warner said on Wednesday morning. “We had a good conversation.”

Warner said he told McGuire that he doesn’t want the restaurant to be closed by state officials, or to be subject to financial penalties for defying the ban on indoor dining.

Warner said he also told McGuire that Baker County, using its share of federal COVID-19 relief aid, will be giving money to many local restaurants that applied for grants.

McGuire said he believes Warner’s concern was “heartfelt.”

McGuire said he hasn’t applied for a grant — he said Warner told him he could receive \$15,000 — because he believes other businesses are suffering worse and need the assistance more than he does.

But McGuire also said that by allowing indoor dining he is trying to take a stand against what he sees as unfair, and unwarranted, restrictions against restaurants.

He pointed out that state officials have repeatedly cited social gatherings, not restaurants, as a significant source of Oregon’s surge in COVID-19 cases over the past several weeks.

McGuire said he doesn’t object to other precautions designed to stem the spread of the virus, including ones that affect restaurants.

While allowing indoor dining this month, McGuire said he has continued to follow the protocols that the state has required for several months, including face

coverings for employees and customers, a 50% occupancy limit, spacing groups of diners and frequently sanitizing surfaces.

“The safety of Oregonians should be the first priority,” McGuire said. “This isn’t some right-wing, anti-mask thing. But somebody needs to do something. We’re trying to stand on our own.”

Warner said he went to the Oregon Trail restaurant on Tuesday to encourage McGuire to apply for financial aid through the county.

“I really don’t want that business to be shut down by the state and fined,” Warner said. “This is tough on restaurants. I just feel really bad for our businesses. We need to help them all we can.”

McGuire said that although he appreciates Warner’s sincerity, he was disappointed by the city manager’s message.

“I was hoping that he was going to say how Baker would stand up and help Baker small businesses open their doors,” McGuire said.

McGuire, who’s also co-owner of the Oregon Trail Motel, which is adjacent to the restaurant at 211 Bridge St., said he’s concerned that some local businesses won’t be able to stay open given the lost revenue due to most major local events being canceled due to the pandemic, including Miners Jubilee, the bull and bronc riding events and the Hells Canyon Motorcycle Rally.

“Baker’s a tourism town,” McGuire said.

FRAUD

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Clawson, who was driving the 2016 Dodge Challenger he bought with part of the federal loan, failed to stop and drove south, running through two stop signs.

Clawson continued south on Highway 7, stopping near Salisbury Junction, about nine miles south of town, according to court records.

He had been arrested for driving under the influence three times in the past three years, in July 2017 and August 2019 in Malheur County, and in March 2018 in Baker County.

Clawson’s arrest happened 10 days after he deposited \$145,200 from a federal loan into an account at Umpqua Bank that Clawson and his girlfriend had opened.

Clawson received the Economic Injury Disaster Loan through the Small Business Administration (SBA), accord-

ing to a press release from the U.S. Attorney Billy J. Williams.

That was one of the financial aid programs included in the CARES Act that Congress passed in late March.

According to court documents, shortly after depositing the \$145,200, Clawson made multiple large cash withdrawals at the drive-thru window of the Umpqua Bank branch in Baker City.

On Aug. 17 he received a \$49,905 cashier’s check from the bank to buy the Dodge Challenger.

Umpqua Bank investigators noted the unusual activity on Clawson’s account and reported it to the SBA.

SBA loan documents showed that the loan was made to benefit Halperin Manufacturing Company in San Diego, California. Though there is no record of any such company, the loan application listed the company’s owner and claimed it employed 350 people. Inves-

tigators contacted the person listed as the owner, but that person denied owning or being affiliated with any such company.

The purported owner also told SBA investigators that the company’s supposed address in San Diego was that individual’s personal residence and not a commercial property with 350 employees.

In early September 2020, investigators from the SBA and the U.S. Secret Service learned about Clawson’s arrest near Baker City while driving the Dodge Challenger.

Clawson later told authorities that he had received a large inheritance from his father, including \$30,000 in cash he had on his person during a subsequent arrest.

On Sept. 11, investigators interviewed Clawson at the Baker County Jail. Clawson claimed to have received the \$145,200 from a woman with whom he had an online dating relationship. He said he didn’t

know what to do with the money and, after he stopped communicating with the woman, he started spending the money. Clawson admitted to using the SBA money to purchase the Dodge Challenger and several other vehicles, according to the press release from the U.S. Attorney’s Office.

Federal agents seized the Dodge Challenger and approximately \$50,000 in cash from the loan.

Prior to receiving the federal loan, Clawson was the victim in a robbery in Baker City on July 7.

Two Baker City men, David Michael McMurdo, 37, and Jace Prowell, 29, were later arrested for allegedly stealing from Clawson two cellphones, about \$500 in cash, a wallet containing his identification, an Umpqua bank card, an orange Casio watch and a Smith and Wesson pocket knife. Clawson sustained minor injuries during the robbery, police said.

OBITUARY

Christopher Christie

Baker City, 1948-2020

Christopher Lee “Chris” Christie, 72, left us all too soon in the early morning hours of Dec. 15, 2020, when his heart gave out.

Chris was born on May 30, 1948, at Anderson Air Force Base on Guam to David and Ruth Ann Thomas Christie. The family moved back to San Bernardino, California, where Chris attended public schools, graduating from San Bernardino High School. Chris had a brother and two sisters, all of whom preceded him in death.

He worked tirelessly his entire life. Chris had a wonderful sense of humor and a sensitive, generous spirit which will be sorely missed. He cared deeply for what was happening around him and took his role as a responsible citizen seriously. He read and brought strong analytical insight to issues of concern. He possessed an astonishing conviction to democracy and justice. His independent thought and honesty persevered with moral courage whether his ideas were perceived as mainstream or not.

Chris’ formal education was in microbiology and medical technology. He earned a bachelor of science degree in Microbiology, with honors/distinction, at California State University, San Bernardino. He worked in a hospital lab, drove for Greyhound Bus and worked briefly for the United States Post Office. He started his own business growing over 100 native plant species in a small nursery.

Chris was a veteran, having served in Germany. He volunteered with Oregon Natural Desert Association putting in many skilled hours of detailed field work after moving to Oregon in the late 1990s. He returned to California for several years to help his beloved uncle, Leonard Christie, and volunteered at an animal shelter there as well. Chris organized and hosted both a native plant group and an educational, alternative-news film series in Baker City. He worked with birding groups, offering diligent and comprehensive work on bird counts and organizational considerations.

Chris’ life joy was documenting nature’s astounding biodiversity. His understanding of and devotion to the natural world were remarkable. He worked endlessly to photograph, research and share information about the world around us, in particular birds, native plants, insects and petroglyphs. His lifelong capacity for learning and his expansive intellect were noteworthy. He worked endlessly, including the night before his heart gave out, at his computer, uploading his photograph series and collected information about pronghorns. Two URLs where some of his photos can be accessed are <https://www.flickr.com/photos/christopherchristie> and <https://calphotos.berkeley.edu/photographers.html>

Chris is survived by his close friend and soulmate, Alice Lentz; two nieces; extended family, friends, neighbors, associates and Rascal Haywire, his most recent, devoted rescue dog.

Memorials can be directed to the Center for Biological Diversity, P.O. Box 710, Tucson, AZ 85702 or at www.biologicaldiversity.org/memorial. To leave an online condolence Christopher’s family, go to www.grayswestco.com

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NEWS OF RECORD

POLICE LOG

Baker City Police Arrests, citations

CONTEMPT OF COURT

(Baker County Justice Court warrant) and FAILURE TO APPEAR (Salem Municipal Court warrant): Andrew Jay Culley, 31, transient, 12:47 p.m. Monday, in the 1200 block of Second St.; cited and released.

Crime reports

FIRST-DEGREE THEFT: Between Dec. 20 and Dec. 21 in the 600 block of Fourth Street; Sara Lee Johnson, 40, of Baker City, reported that four tires valued at \$1,200 were taken from a shed on her property.

FIRST-DEGREE THEFT: Melissa Ann Fulfer of Baker City reported at 7:28 p.m. Monday, the theft of a box from her closet containing her wedding ring.

Baker County Sheriff’s Office

Arrests, citations

CHILD NEGLECT (Baker County Circuit Court warrant): Marissa Alicia Ramos, 34, 230 Foothill Drive, 9:52 a.m. Tuesday at the Courthouse; cited and released.

FOURTH-DEGREE ASSAULT (Baker County Circuit Court warrant): Sierra Jean Dougharity, 32, Baker City, 4:51 p.m. Tuesday on Grace Street; cited and released.

SECOND-DEGREE THEFT

(Two Baker County Justice Court warrants): Michael Steven Myers-Gabiola, 29, transient, 8 a.m. Monday, on Hunt Mountain Lane; cited and released.

FRAUD-NEGOTIATING A BAD CHECK: Stacy Lynne Wiechman, 58, of Baker City, 11:35 a.m. Monday, in the 2400 block of 10th Street; cited and released.

PAROLE VIOLATION (Oregon State Parole Board warrant): Tyler Joseph Anders, 31, transient, 1:32 p.m. Monday, on Highway 30, about 5 miles south of Baker City; jailed.

Baker City Fire Alarms Saturday, Dec. 19

5:04 p.m. — Firefighters responded to a call at 2320 Mitchell St. Fire Chief Sean Lee said the fire in a single-wide mobile home was caused by an electrical malfunction under the mobile home. The fire was contained under the structure, which sustained minimal damage, Lee said. The property is owned by Rodney Garhart of Hermiston. The tenants were displaced for the night because water and electrical service was disrupted by the fire, Lee said. They had a place to stay and also were referred to Red Cross for any additional help they might need, he said. There were no injuries.

