



Baker City Herald

March 4, 2021

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GO! Magazine
Your guide to arts, entertainment and other events happening around Northeast Oregon

IN THIS EDITION: Local • Business & AgLife • Go! magazine **\$1.50**

QUICK HITS

Good Day Wish To A Subscriber

A special good day to Herald subscriber Alisa Anderson of Baker City.

Local, 2A

Every Oregon county will receive 100 doses this week of the new Johnson & Johnson single-shot COVID-19 vaccine that President Joe Biden said Tuesday is a key part of vaccinating all Americans before summer.

BRIEFING

Prekindergarten preenrollment at Haines Elementary

HAINES — Haines Elementary School has announced that preenrollment for its prekindergarten program will begin April 1.

Students must be 4 years old by Sept. 1, 2021, to enroll for the 2021-2022 school year, a press release stated. Priority will be given to students residing in the Haines enrollment area.

From there, it will follow the policy on the District's website under Board Policies, Students, Remote Rural Schools Enrollment at policy.osba.org/baker/JC%20R%20D1.PDF

Pre-K hours are 7:45 a.m. to 11:20 a.m. Monday through Thursday. More information is available by calling Kathleen Christensen, school secretary, at 541-524-2400.

WEATHER

Today
50 / 33

Sunny
Friday
54 / 33
Partly sunny

Full forecast on the back of the B section.

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

County extends visitor contract

Deal with Chamber of Commerce to operate visitors center in Baker City continues through Aug. 31

By **Samantha O'Conner**
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The Baker County Board of Commissioners voted 3-0 on Wednesday morning, March 3, to extend until Aug. 31, 2021, the county's contract with the Baker County Chamber of Commerce, through Baker County

Unlimited, to operate the visitors center in Baker City.

Commissioner Mark Bennett, who made the motion to extend the contract, said the action will end any uncertainty about the Chamber's role through the summer.

Shelly Cutler, the Chamber's execu-

tive director, said last week that she was concerned about the possibility that commissioners would cancel the contract, which pays the Chamber about \$77,000 per year.

The loss of the contract could imperil the Chamber's ability to put on events, including the Miners Jubilee

celebration in July, Cutler said.

The money comes from the lodging tax that guests pay at motels, bed and breakfasts, RV parks, vacation rental homes, campgrounds and other lodging businesses.

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Class 1A State Basketball Tournaments Take A Year Off Due To Pandemic



Kathy Orr/Baker City Herald File

The bleachers in the Baker High School gym aren't packed as usual this week with enthusiastic basketball fans from Oregon's smallest high schools. Due to the pandemic, the annual Class 1A state girls and boys basketball tournaments, a Baker City tradition since the 1970s, were canceled.

Missing Hoops

By **Jayson Jacoby**
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Kathy Taylor is supposed to be exhausted right now. She should be rushing from one task to another this week, with scarcely a spare moment to rest.

Taylor wishes that were so. For more than a quarter century, the first week of March has meant one thing for Kathy and her husband, Rick.

Basketball. Specifically, the Class 1A state basketball girls and boys tournaments at Baker High School. It's the culmination of the season for Oregon's smallest high schools, the week when players from towns, some of which lack a single traffic signal, try to win one of those glossy trophies carved in the shape of the state.

Kathy Taylor has been co-director of the annual tournaments, which are run by Baker County Tournaments, since 2017.

But she and her husband have volunteered to help with the events since 1994.

The tournaments themselves have an even longer legacy at BHS. The boys tournament has taken place there every year since 1974, and the girls tournament moved to Baker City in 1977.

But then came the pandemic. And with high school basketball not scheduled to start in Oregon until May, and no state tournaments planned, 2021 will be the year of the asterisk.

Tournaments A Big Boost For Baker City businesses

By **Samantha O'Conner** and **Jayson Jacoby**
Baker City Herald

The Class 1A state tournaments don't just bring exciting basketball to Baker City. They bring business.

The influx of hundreds of visitors who arrive from across Oregon to watch their sons and daughters, grandsons and granddaughters, compete at Baker High School also fills motels and restaurants during late winter, an otherwise sluggish period for the area's tourism economy.

"Economically it's huge," said Shelly Cutler, executive director

of the Baker County Chamber of Commerce. "Each one of those folks, they're dining out, they're shopping downtown."

In a report after the 2020 tournaments, Kathy Taylor, co-director of the events, wrote that "the motels reported that they were full from Wednesday evening through Saturday morning. Some teams stayed Tuesday night and some stayed Saturday night depending on their games."

Total attendance at the tournament over the four days was 9,493.

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"I feel lost," Kathy Taylor said on Tuesday morning, March 2. "It's like there's something I'm supposed to be doing but I'm not."

Taylor said the Oregon School Activities Association (OSAA), which oversees prep sports in the state, told her in December that the tournaments wouldn't happen in 2021.

An OSAA official says, however, that the organization has no plan to move the tournaments from Baker City.

And Taylor wants nothing more than to return to her usual hectic

introduction to March in 2022.

"I'm hoping we get back to some semblance of what we call normal," she said.

A year ago the situation at the BHS gym seemed normal only with the benefit of hindsight.

The 2020 Class 1A tournaments took place as scheduled from March 4 to March 7 (as did the Class 2A events in Pendleton, and the Class 3A tournaments in North Bend).

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Two COVID deaths reported

87-year-old Baker County woman, and an 88-year man, each of whom had underlying conditions, both died Feb. 26 at home

By **Jayson Jacoby**
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Two Baker County residents died on Feb. 26, two days after testing positive for COVID-19, the Oregon Health Authority (OHA) announced on Tuesday, March 2.

The deaths bring the county's total to nine during the pandemic.

Both people died at home, according to OHA.

One resident is an 87-year-old woman, the other an 88-year-old man.

Both had underlying medical conditions, according to OHA.

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15 virus cases at Settler's Park

10 cases reported at Behlen Mfg. Co., the county's first workplace outbreak

By **Jayson Jacoby**
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Fifteen cases of COVID-19 have been reported at Settler's Park memory care community in Baker City.

The majority of people who have tested positive have had "mild to no symptoms," according to a press release issued Wednesday, March 3, by the Baker County Health Department.

The press release did not say how many of the cases are residents and how many are employees.

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