

Baker City has the meats

By SAMANTHA O'CONNOR
Baker City Herald

BAKER CITY — An old-fashioned butcher shop, meat counter and full-service deli opens May 1 in Baker City.

Elkhorn Custom Meats and Deli is at 2970 H St., just west of 10th Street in a refreshed building that formerly housed a similar type of business.

Owners Heather Rudolph and Bill and Dawn Simpson said they plan to use as many local ingredients as possible.

“Local produce, locally baked breads on our sandwiches, local meat and processed meats that we make here — roast beef, pastrami, corned beef. Lots of stuff,” Bill Simpson said.

“Everybody’s so excited. It’s really exciting to finally be a part of something that the community wants and needs,” Dawn Simpson said.

The owners plan to do custom meat-processing for local ranchers, and they’ll process deer, elk and other wild game in addition to the retail side of the business.

The grand opening on May 1 includes tours of the shop, a barbecue and, potentially, a ribbon-cutting ceremony with the Baker County Chamber of Commerce.

The new owners have repainted the exterior of the building, and they plan to have a porch with tables outside.

Bill Simpson said Elkhorn Custom Meats and Deli will employ David Lyle as a meat cutter, a former employee of Albertsons.

“He’s been a huge help,” Simpson said. “Alexis Easton is another one. I just wanted to recognize them, but this is where they’re going to call home coming May first.”

Rudolph, who grew up in Baker City, said she moved back to town, after living in Gillette, Wyoming, almost a year ago while the COVID-19 pandemic was ramping up.

Rudolph said while she was in Wyoming, she attended a downtown farmers market and asked the event coordinator about the prospects of a butcher shop and deli. She said the coordinator was encouraging.

“I knew this was the thing that I wanted to do and so I guess that gave me a vision,” Rudolph said.

Rudolph also said supporting Baker City is what motivates her.

“I grew up in Baker and I was in 4-H and FFA,” she said.



Samantha O'Conner/Baker City Herald

From left, Bill and Dawn Simpson, and Heather Rudolph, are the owners of Elkhorn Custom Meats and Deli, which opens May 1, 2021, in Baker City.



Samantha O'Conner/Baker City Herald

Co-owner Dawn Simpson touches up the fresh paint Friday, April 16, 2021, on the front of Elkhorn Custom Meats and Deli, which opens May 1, in Baker City.

Rudolph returned to her hometown in 2020, when she started asking people who might be interested in going into business with her, or helping her get started. That’s how she ended up meeting Bill Simpson.

“One day, I was watching a video through this online meat processing class that I was taking, and the video made me hungry for a good piece of steak,” Rudolph said. “So I went to Albertsons and was trying to steal one of Bill’s employees and he said, ‘Hey, you should really talk to Bill, he knows a lot of stuff.’ So, I got brave and called this stranger and Bill said, ‘Why don’t you come in

and talk to me?’ So I did and here we are,” Rudolph said.

Like Rudolph, Bill Simpson participated in FFA, and he also learned to cut meat when he was just 14.

“I had one of these (types of businesses) for 12 years in Redmond and sold it due to a divorce, and here we are again,” Bill Simpson said.

Dawn Simpson has been in the grocery industry for 38 years, and she said she always wanted to have her own business.

“We actually looked at doing this a year ago and it wasn’t the right time,” Dawn Simpson said. “And we didn’t have a Heather. We needed a Heather.

And she needed us. So I’ve always wanted my own business and I’m pretty excited about being part of the community. That’s what I’m most excited about; is getting to know the community.”

Along with Elkhorn Custom Meats and Deli in Baker City, Bill Simpson said he hopes to open a federally inspected beef-processing facility next year in Haines. The federal inspection stamp would allow them to sell meat to anybody, including retail stores.

“That’s what we really want to do; we want to focus on helping the community, the ranchers, we want to raise good kids out of FFA, so we have FFA chapters that are involved with us,” Bill Simpson said.

He said he hopes to share his knowledge about grading meat with local students, and perhaps helping them get the skills the needed to find a job in the industry.

His vision for the Haines facility is it would have a catwalk above the cutting floor so visitors, including students, could watch the butchers producing sausage, jerky and other products. He said it would be similar to the Tillamook Creamery on the Oregon Coast, with a plexiglass window where people can watch the process.

Check the Elkhorn Custom Meats and Deli Facebook page for updates.

OTEC holds 2021 annual membership meeting virtually

The Observer

BAKER CITY — Oregon Trail Electric Cooperative announced it is holding its annual meeting virtually due to restrictions related to the COVID-19 pandemic and concern for the health and well-being of customers.

The meeting takes place Saturday, May 15, starting at 10:30 a.m., and three positions on the OTEC Board of Directors are up for election, but only Position 4, the Union County seat, is a contested race. Attorney Charles Gillis of La Grande is trying to unseat Grande Ronde Valley farmer G. Austin Bingaman, who has served nine years on the OTEC board.

Incumbents are the only candidates in the other two races. Wayne Overton seeks election to Position 5 (Baker County), and Gary Miller seeks to serve again in Position 6 (Grant County).

All candidates are running to serve a three-year term, and OTEC will announce the results of the races at the meeting.

Board President Charlene Chase will conduct business as necessary, and CEO Les Penning will provide an update on the state of the cooperative.

Watch for your election ballot in the mail after and return it by May 7 using the prepaid colored envelope. Read the instructions on the ballot, OTEC urged in the press release. And if you are unable to mail your ballot, drop it off at the secure drop boxes at your local OTEC office no later than May 14 or at OTEC headquarters in Baker City on May 15 before 10 a.m.

Each ballot comes with a voter’s guide with candidate profiles. Candidate profiles and other election details also appear on www.otec.coop/annual-meeting-board-elections and will be included in the May issue of Ruralite. Customers voting by mail have the chance to win one of three \$100 energy credits.

All of OTEC’s customers — the member-owners of the cooperative — can vote in the election. Members can view the annual meeting virtually on May 15 on the homepage of www.otec.coop or on OTEC’s Facebook page. Members who do not have access to a computer will be able to call in to listen to the meeting. The toll-free call-in number is 1-877-309-2073. The access code is 798-185-293.

If you have any questions on the state of the annual meeting or any questions about your ballot or the election, call OTEC’s communications office at 541-524-2858 or email communications@otec.coop.

Water rights enforcement bill gains traction

By MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI
Capital Press

SALEM — A bill that would alter the process for enforcing Oregon water rights has gained traction after supporters scaled back changes that adversely affected junior irrigators.

The original version of House Bill 2244 would have partially eliminated the “automatic stay” provision of Oregon water law, under which junior irrigators can file lawsuits to prevent water shut-offs.

A revised version of the bill would retain the “automatic stay” provision but accelerate the legal process to avoid prolonged uncertainty about water rights enforcement.

“We know if we don’t handle these quickly, either the fish die or the crops die,” said Rep. Marty Wilde, D-Eugene.

A vote on HB 2244 is scheduled for the House floor on April 20 after the House Water Committee approved the bill 5-3 with a “do pass” recommendation.

The automatic stay pro-

vision has come under criticism in recent years by the Klamath Tribes, who’ve argued it’s effectively been used to thwart the enforcement of their “time immemorial” water rights.

Litigation takes longer than the irrigation season, allowing junior users to continue diverting water despite the tribes’ “water call” for enforcement action, according to critics.

The farm industry has defended the automatic stay as protecting due process for junior irrigators who disagree with the Oregon Water Resources Department’s findings that they’ve infringed on senior water rights.

For example, the automatic stay provision was invoked when groundwater irrigators disagreed with OWRD’s claims that wells were interfering with surface water flows.

Proposals to eliminate or curtail the automatic stay were debated during the 2019 and 2020 legislative sessions but died in committee upon adjournment.

See, [Water/Page 2B](#)

Nail tech brings ‘fakes’ to Enterprise

By BILL BRADSHAW
Wallowa County Chieftain

ENTERPRISE — Dajah LaFave saw a need in Enterprise and set up an Eastern Oregon Nail Co. to meet it.

She only recently learned that despite numerous beauty regimens available here, no one did “fake” nails. By “fake,” she clarified that means acrylic nails or nail extensions, in addition to a regular manicure of one’s natural nails.

She said that last year, her parents had the opportunity to buy a bed and breakfast in Imnaha and encouraged her to check out Wallowa County.

“They were, like, ‘Oh, the atmosphere here is so amazing,’ so I decided to check it out and I found out nobody down here does (fake) nails,” she said. “When I heard nobody here was doing fake nails, I thought my business would do well here.”

LaFave opened shop Tuesday, April 6, by renting space at Belle



Bill Bradshaw/Wallowa County Chieftain/Wallowa County Chieftain

Dajah LaFave recently opened the Eastern Oregon Nail Co. at Belle Salon in Enterprise. She spoke of her new venture Thursday, April 8, 2021. Below, La Fave shows the design on her own nails.

Salon, at 200 W. Main St.

She said that when she posted her opening on Facebook, response was overwhelming.

“The response I got was just insane. I booked 25 people last night,” she said Thursday, April 8. “I got home and when my



phone got service, it was like, ‘ding, ding, ding, ding,’ people wanting to get their nails done. I’m going to do so well. I’m so excited to be able to meet everybody here and get to know the community. Everybody here knows everybody.”

But, she said, it’s more than just about doing business — it’s about becoming part of the community.

“I’ve had people come in and say, ‘Hi, how’s your mom?’ but I don’t know who anybody is,” she said. “But I want to be able to get that closeness.”

LaFave had been operating a business in Forest Grove, near Portland before coming to Enterprise. Her dad, Rick LaFave, recently moved his welding and fabricating shop, Renaissance Design Fabrication and Powder Coating from Forest Grove. Her mom, Carey LaFave, is a stay-at-home mom.

Dajah’s immediate family consists of her two dogs.

“I have a ‘wiener dog’ named Oscar Meyer Wiener and a pit bull named Thor,” she said, but otherwise, she’s single.

“I’m only 20 years old. I’m too young,” she

See, [Nails/Page 2B](#)