

The Wards

Ralph and Alice Ward of Baker City recently celebrated their 70th wedding anniversary. The couple were married on Aug. 26, 1951, at the Presbyterian Church in Baker. They took vows to forever honor and cherish each other. They have been true to their words and inspiration to us all as we seek a true loving partnership, their family said.



Contributed Photo
Ralph and Alice Ward.

The Wards celebrated this special anniversary with a family dinner at home with their children and spouses — Kathy and Harold, Mark and Lisa, and Craig and Cherie, and four grandchildren and two great-grandchildren — Morgan, Alyssa and Jordan, Calli, Matt, Chloe and Lauren. Ralph is a partner in Ward Ranches and served one term as Baker County Judge. Alice was a bookkeeper for Ward Ranches and Guyer and Associates.



Contributed Photo
Alice and Ralph Ward on their wedding day, Aug. 26, 1951.

COVID

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Ages 60 to 69

This is the largest age group in the county, with about 3,080 residents, roughly 18.5% of the population. The age group has accounted for 12.1% of COVID-19 cases.

In Baker County, the vaccination rate for people in their 60s is 54.6%. The statewide rate is 77.3%.

Ages 10 to 19

This age group accounted for 9.5% of the county's COVID-19 cases.

Portland State University's Population Research Center doesn't list the number of Baker County residents in this age range. There are about 1,270 residents ages 12 to 19, which is 7.6% of the county's population.

Residents 17 and younger constitute about 18.2% of

the county's population, and 14% of COVID-19 cases.

People younger than 12 aren't eligible to be vaccinated. Baker County's vaccination rate for people ages 12 to 19 is 25.7%. The statewide rate for that age range is 56.7%.

Baker County's oldest residents, meanwhile — those 70 and older — have accounted for a disproportionately small percentage of the county's virus cases.

Ages 70 to 79

This age group, with about 2,200 members in the county, accounts for about 13.2% of the population. But residents in their 70s have had 7.3% of the county's COVID-19 cases.

Baker County's vaccination rate for residents in their 70s is 67%. The statewide rate is 86%.

Ages 80 and older

With about 1,100 residents, this age group

constitutes 6.6% of the county's population. About 5.3% of the county's COVID-19 cases have been in residents 80 or older.

In Baker County, 69.4% of residents 80 and older are vaccinated, the highest rate among age groups. The statewide rate is 79.4%.

The statistics tell a much different tale when it comes to COVID-19-related deaths in the county.

There have been 19 deaths during the pandemic, and all but three of those Baker County residents were older than 70.

The exceptions are two residents who were 59 when they died, and one 65-year-old.

The other ages: 82, 90, 83, 95, 85, 86, 88, 87, 85, 81, 75, 71, 74, 95, 93, 83.

The average age of county residents who died after testing positive for the virus is 80.8 years.

Statewide, 72.5% of COVID-19-related deaths

were residents 70 or older, and 48.5% were 80 or older.

August sets record for cases

The surge in COVID-19 infections driven by the more contagious delta variant set a new monthly record for cases in Baker County.

There were 13 cases reported on the final day of the month, raising the August total to 300. The previous record was 196 cases in December 2020.

August's total exceeded the combined total for July (91), June (70) and May (51).

The case rate was consistent, with 147 during the first 15 days of the month, and 153 over the final 16 days. There were 10 or more cases on 11 of the month's 31 days, the most days with double-digit cases during the pandemic. The previous record was six days, in December 2020.

VACCINES

Continued from A1

for one of the exceptions rather than potentially lose their jobs or resign.

Myers said she and Lemmon, representing the classified workers, have been meeting with district management to discuss "mitigations" that will be required for unvaccinated workers who choose the medical or religious exception.

Although the specific requirements haven't been agreed to, Myers said one possibility is that unvaccinated employees will have to be tested regularly for COVID-19.

"We're working together to do what's best for our district and our students," Myers said. "Our members want to be in person with our students. We all recognize that's what's best for our students."

Myers said that although

she opposes a state vaccination mandate for school workers, she's glad the state is allowing individual school districts to decide the mitigation measures for workers who opt for an exception in lieu of vaccination.

"I am a complete supporter of local control," Myers said.

Lemmon agreed.

"The last thing anybody wants is to be told what to do," she said. "We live in America. This is a country of freedom."

Myers said the announcement that the governor's mandate is not absolute, and that employees can seek medical or religious exceptions, had a significant effect on many members' attitudes.

After the governor's initial announcement of the vaccine mandate on Thursday, Aug. 19, Myers said her phone "didn't stop ringing until the next Monday" as teachers called, worried that they would have

to choose between their job and being vaccinated.

"People were crying, not knowing what to do," Myers said. "It was heartbreaking. We want to be here for our students. We love them."

"I am a complete supporter of local control."

— Toni Myers, president, Baker Education Association

When teachers learned a few days later about the exceptions, it was "very reassuring" to many, Myers said.

"That made the day for a lot of people," she said.

Lemmon said she believes some classified workers are "relieved because they do have that option."

Myers said she doesn't know how many Baker Education Association members are vaccinated. She said she has not posed that question to members, and does not intend to do so.

"We have people on both sides of this topic, which makes it really difficult," Myers said. "We want to support our members as to what they're comfortable with, and to listen to both sides."

Lemmon said she believes it is a violation of employees' privacy to ask their vaccination status. She said she doesn't know how many classified employees are vaccinated.

Myers said that although union members' feelings about the vaccine vary, the "overwhelming majority" of teachers, including many of those who are already vaccinated, oppose the governor's mandate.

"They think people should be able to choose," Myers said.

Lemmon said members of her union generally feel the same.

"As long as we have the option, we'll be OK," she said. "Forcing us to do something is not OK."

Lemmon said that although it's possible a "handful" of classified staff will choose to resign due to the vaccine issue, she believes most of those who aren't vaccinated want to keep their jobs.

Lindsey McDowell, public information and communications coordinator for the Baker School District, wrote in an email to the Herald on Tuesday afternoon that "we are in the process of planning with staff and the local health department for the October 18 deadline to have all those working in our K-12 schools vaccinated against COVID-19 (or with an approved medical or religious exception by the same deadline)."

McDowell wrote that the Oregon Department of Education (ODE) requires that school districts "must take reasonable steps to ensure that unvaccinated teachers, school staff and volunteers are protected from contracting and spreading COVID-19."

These steps could include weekly testing, wearing an N95 face mask, additional physical distancing or an isolated worksite, McDowell wrote, citing ODE guidelines.

"We are still in the research/discussion stage of what the mitigations will be for our school district," she wrote. "Fortunately, we have the absolute best staff, who love our students immensely and want to do what is best for them. We are a team in keeping our schools safe and open to both regular instruction and extra-curricular activities."

WOLVES

Continued from A1

ODFW depredation investigations.

Those attacks prompted ODFW Director Curt Melcher to issue a permit on July 31 allowing the livestock owners, their designated agents or ODFW employees to kill up to four subadult wolves from the pack, not including its breeding pair.

On Aug. 1, ODFW employees shot and killed two wolf pups, part of the litter of seven pups that the breeding pair produced this spring.

The permit, the first ODFW had issued since 2018, was set to expire Aug. 21. But after ODFW biologists confirmed that Lookout Mountain wolves had killed a calf on Aug. 19, the agency extended the permit through Sept. 14. The permit does not add to the number of wolves that can be killed, however — the limit is still four, which means no more than two additional subadult wolves from the pack can be killed, following the

two pups killed Aug. 1.

As of Wednesday morning, Sept. 1, no wolves had been killed since the two on Aug. 1, according to ODFW.

ODFW biologists believe the pack consists of the breeding pair, two yearlings born in the spring of 2020, and the five remaining pups from this spring's litter.

The most recent depredation was reported the morning of Aug. 30, when a rancher checking cattle found the carcass of a 600-pound calf in a 2,800-acre pasture that includes a mixture of public and private land. The site is in the Lawrence Creek area northeast of Durkee. All of the wolf depredations have been in that general vicinity.

The carcass was partially consumed but most of the

hide was intact, according to an ODFW report.

Biologists found a struggle scene with broken vegetation and a blood trail leading about 25 yards to the carcass, along with wolf tracks.

Biologists examined the calf and found numerous pre-mortem tooth scrapes on both rear legs above the hock, and on the left front leg near the elbow, with tissue damage up to 1 1/2 inches deep.

The location and size of the wounds are consistent with wolf attacks on cattle, according to the ODFW report.

Biologists estimated the calf was killed late on Sunday, Aug. 29, or early the following day.

FIRE

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The Hot Shot crew was joined by two other crews, one from the Wallowa-Whitman and one from the Umatilla National Forest, as well as other firefighters.

The Rock Creek fire posed one of the bigger threats this summer on the southern half of the Wallowa-Whitman,

which had a tranquil fire season compared with other parts of Oregon and the West.

Prior to the Rock Creek fire, there had 16 fires on the Burnt-Powder Fire Zone, which includes most of the southern half of the Wallowa-Whitman. Lighting sparked 13 of the fires, and three were human-caused (four now, with the Rock Creek fire).

The 16 fires burned a

total of 8.2 acres.

McCraw said fire investigators have not had a chance to look at the site, although the fire definitely was human-caused.

He reminded forest visitors that the fire danger remains high, and that campfires are allowed only in designated campgrounds and recreation sites. There are no such sites in the upper Rock Creek canyon.



QUAIL RIDGE GOLF COURSE PRESENTS

Veteran's Appreciation Day!

FREE Golf for Baker & Union County Veterans & their families*

FREE BBQ from 11am - 1pm

*Family includes spouse/partner and dependents
*Cart & club rentals included

VETERAN SERVICES & INFO WILL BE AVAILABLE AT THE CLUBHOUSE.

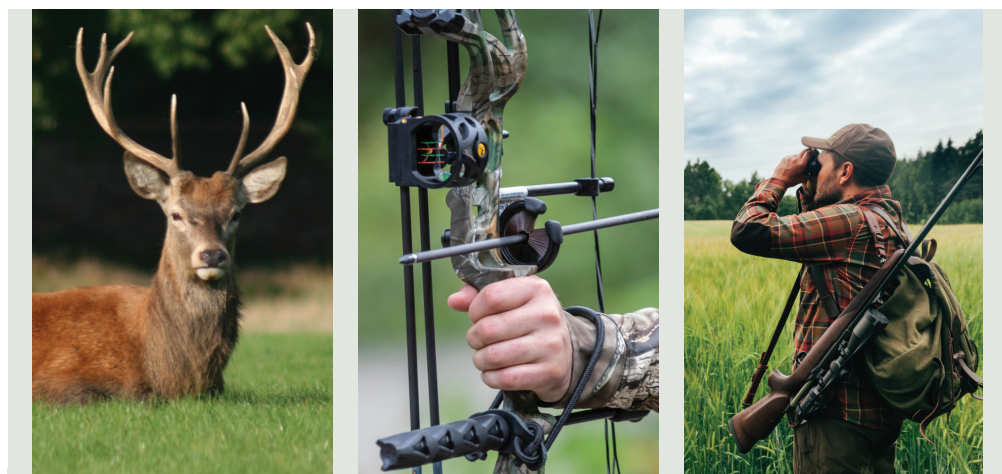
PARTICIPANTS ARE ENCOURAGED TO CALL AHEAD FOR TEE TIMES (9AM TO 2PM). PLEASE CALL 541-523-2358.

CURRENT STATE COVID GUIDELINES WILL BE FOLLOWED.

**Sunday, September 12, 2021
9am to 3pm**



APPLIANCES & MORE
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