



GO! Magazine Your weekly guide to arts and entertainment events around Northeast Oregon

Baker City Herald

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QUICK HITS

Good Day Wish To A Subscriber

A special good day to Herald subscriber Kenneth Schuh of Baker City.

Region, A5

Jessica Gomez wants to be Oregon's next governor, and as she travels the state she's hearing a lot about how little there is of a vital resource. Water.

BRIEFING

Nighttime delays on Highway 86 Saturday and early Sunday morning

Drivers planning to travel on Highway 86 between Baker City and Oxbow between 10 p.m. Saturday, Sept. 18 and 5 a.m. Sunday, Sept. 19 should expect possible 20-minute delays as a wide trailer travels west on the highway after hauling an electrical transformer earlier in the week.

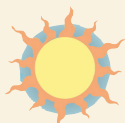
Eagles past presidents plan dinner Friday

The Eagles Past Presidents Club is having a dinner on Friday, Sept. 17 from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. at 2935 H St. in Baker City. The menu includes chicken fried chicken, mashed potatoes and gravy, corn and a dessert for \$10. Eagles members and their guests are welcome.

WEATHER

Today

67 / 31 Sunny



Friday

79 / 46 Mostly cloudy



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

COVID SURGE TAXES HOSPITAL

■ Saint Alphonsus treating more patients, who are younger and mostly unvaccinated

By JAYSON JACOBY
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Dr. Dave Richards concedes that he questioned, earlier in the pandemic, whether all healthy people should be vaccinated against COVID-19.

He wasn't sure he would be inoculated.

But after treating patients during the dramatic increase in infections in Baker County over the past six weeks or so, Richards, who is medical director for the emergency department at Saint Alphon-

sus Medical Center-Baker City, has no lingering doubts.

"This is simple — get vaccinated," Richards, who is vaccinated, said during an interview on Friday, Sept. 10 in the emergency department at the Baker City hospital.

"It's a slam dunk."

Richards said he's convinced, nine months after vaccines became available, that they are safe.

"We've got good data on the vaccines," he said.

As for the benefits of vaccination, Richards said



Jayson Jacoby/Baker City Herald

Dr. Dave Richards, left, medical director of the emergency department at Saint Alphonsus Medical Center-Baker City, and Ashley Dunten, a registered nurse at the hospital, in the emergency room at the hospital on Friday, Sept. 10.

his experience since late July, when Baker County's case numbers began to rise along with the patient load at the hospital, has been unequivocal.

"We don't see sick people that have been vaccinated," he said. "You can still be

infected, and you might have a few rough days, but you'll probably be fine."

That's not necessarily the case, though, with people who are not vaccinated and who contract COVID-19, said

See, **Hospital** / Page A3

Council vacancy hits voting deadlock

By SAMANTHA O'CONNOR
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The six current members of the Baker City Council tried to fill the one vacant seat on the Council Tuesday, Sept. 14, but it didn't quite work out.

Two candidates — Randy Daugherty and Thomas Hughes — each received three votes.

See, **Council** / Page A3

County settles road lawsuit

By SAMANTHA O'CONNOR and JAYSON JACOBY
Baker City Herald

Baker County Commissioners voted 2-1 on Wednesday, Sept. 15 to approve a settlement in the lawsuit the county filed more than 2 1/2 years ago to force a landowner in the eastern part of the county to unlock a gate blocking public access to a dirt road.

Under the settlement, the county will pay the landowner \$125,000 for a "permanent undisputed right of way" on the road in question.

The county also agrees in the settlement to fill potholes and grade the section of road through the private property.

Larry Sullivan, a Vale attorney, filed the lawsuit on the county's behalf on Feb. 7, 2019.

The defendants — Timber Canyon Ranch LLC, Kennerly Ranches LLC and Forsea River Ranch LLC — are represented by Charles F. Hudson of Portland.

The road in question connects the Lookout Mountain Road to the Snake River Road, in the upper Connor Creek area.

In 2017, Todd Longgood and the Dennis Omer Hansen Revocable Living Trust bought property in the area and installed a locked gate across the road.

County officials objected to the road closure, and eventually chose to sue.

See, **Suit** / Page A5

COVID cases still on the rise

By JAYSON JACOBY
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Baker County matched its daily record of 37 COVID-19 cases on Tuesday, Sept. 14 as September continues at a pace that would top August's monthly record of 300 cases.

The 37 cases Tuesday pushed September's total through 14 days to 244.

August had a daily average of just under 10 cases.

September's daily average so far is 17.4. September already has the second-highest total cases of any month during the pandemic, topping December 2020's total of 196.

Baker County's case rate per 100,000 population was 765.9 for the week Sept. 5-11,

the highest among Oregon's 36 counties and the county's highest rate during the pandemic. The statewide case rate per 100,000 during that week was 329.3, according to the Oregon Health Authority (OHA).

Baker County's test positivity rate for Sept. 5-11 was 26.5%, third-highest behind Gilliam (33.3%) and Lake (30.8%).

The statewide test positivity rate was 12%.

Baker County Commissioner Mark Bennett, who has served as the county's incident commander throughout the pandemic, said on Wednesday, Sept. 15 that his biggest concern is hospital capacity.

Idaho public health officials said Tuesday that

the Boise area might begin rationing health care soon.

"That's a very bad place to be in," Bennett said.

His concern is that Baker County residents who have a health emergency — including heart attacks, accidents or other issues that don't involve COVID-19 — won't be able to be transported to a Boise hospital that has a higher level of care than Saint Alphonsus Medical Center-Baker City.

"There may not be space for you," Bennett said.

He urges residents to stay home if they feel ill, even if they don't think they have COVID-19.

That includes parents of children.

Bennett said he recently talked with the parent of a child in the Baker School District who kept the child

home even though the child's symptoms were initially mild. The symptoms worsened, although Bennett said that when he last talked to the parent the results of a COVID test hadn't arrived.

The family also kept the child's siblings home, Bennett said.

He acknowledged that keeping children home from school can be a hassle for working parents, but he appreciates the "abundance of caution" the family showed.

People who stay home can reduce the spread of the virus in the community, Bennett said.

"Erring on the side of caution is probably the best step," he said. "We can't get a handle on (the virus) otherwise."

See, **COVID** / Page A5



Bennett

Barbara's blooms brighten path

By LISA BRITTON
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Barbara Prowell isn't quite sure what prompted her to plant the flowers along the Leo Adler Memorial Parkway.

It was in 2001, she says, the spring after her husband, Richard, passed away on Sept. 27, 2000.

"I needed something to do," she said. "I thought I'll sprinkle a few seeds and see what happens."

That patch still brightens the pathway today, near where it crosses Campbell Street.

Now, at 88, Prowell is ready to retire from tending the flowers.

It was during a meeting at the Baker County Library

where Sigrid Johnson approached Prowell.

"Sigrid came over and said 'Do you need help watering? Yes!'" Prowell said. "I was so glad when she volunteered."

Then Johnson asked her friend Jerri Wickert to help.

"She's roped me into a lot over the years," Wickert said, smiling at her friend.

And these two are recruiting others to help care for the blooms if they are out of town.

"It takes a village," Johnson said.

Prowell said she's had some help over the years — her grandchildren helped water, and friends would check the patch if she was gone. Recently, Tom Clements rebuilt the split rail fence that



Lisa Britton/Baker City Herald

Barbara Prowell, right, has tended this flower garden along the Leo Adler Memorial Parkway for nearly 20 years. She's now handing the task over to Sigrid Johnson, left, and Jerri Wickert.

lines the bed of flowers.

For many years Prowell brought water from her own house.

"I remember her hauling

big buckets of water," Wickert said.

One day, Brandon Svitak, who owns nearby Baker County Heating & Cooling

noticed her carrying jugs of water and offered to let her use the water at his building.

That has eased the watering chore immensely, Prowell said.

Every year she would care for the flowers from May through September. Many reseed, and she adds new seeds every year as well.

Varieties include sunflowers, cosmos, daisies, bachelor buttons, poppies, and blanket flower.

"I love flowers," Prowell said.

And she can't name a favorite.

"I like them all."

Wickert will soon install signs designating the patch as "Barbara's Flower Garden."



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SATURDAY — DEATH TOLL CONTINUES TO RISE IN LOCAL WHITE-TAILED DEER