

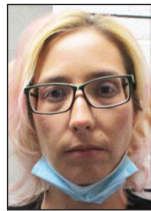
# Halfway woman charged with assault

## Baker City Herald

A Halfway woman is accused of injuring a woman during an altercation early Wednesday, Sept. 15 by backing up her pickup truck rapidly and hitting the other woman in the hand with the truck's side mirror.

Jessica Marie Gonzales, 31, of Halfway, was arrested at 4:49 a.m. and taken to the Baker County Jail.

She is charged with reckless driving, reckless endangering, attempted third-degree assault, fourth-degree assault and failing to perform the duties of a driver.



Gonzales

Gonzales was arraigned Thursday in Baker County Circuit Court and given a conditional release. She is scheduled to enter a plea on Nov. 1 at 11:15 a.m.

According to a report from Deputy Gabe Maldonado of the Baker County Sheriff's Office, who arrested Gonzales, the incident started around 1:55 a.m. Wednesday when Gonzales parked her white 1998 Dodge pickup at a stop sign in front of Shyla Melchior's home at 115 Dawson St. in Halfway.

Maldonado wrote in his report that Melchior, 32, told him Gonzales

revved the engine. Melchior told Maldonado that she believed Gonzales was trying to get the attention of Melchior or Gonzales' boyfriend, Troy Millhollin, 43, who was in Melchior's home.

According to the report, Melchior went out to the street to confront Gonzales, yelling at her through the closed driver's side window.

Melchior told Maldonado that Gonzales backed up the truck rapidly. Melchior said she raised her right hand, which was struck by the truck's driver's side mirror.

Melchior told Maldonado that Gonzales drove up the street, made a

U-turn and then drove into Melchior's yard, stopping near the part of the home where Melchior's son was sleeping.

Gonzales then backed up and drove east on Dawson Street, coming close to where Melchior was standing, according to the deputy's report.

Maldonado also interviewed Millhollin, who told the deputy that he heard Gonzales' truck and saw Melchior standing beside the vehicle when the truck reversed, nearing hitting a shed.

Melchior told Maldonado that her right hand and forearm were numb and painful, that her hand

was bleeding and that there were glass shards in the wound. She went to Saint Alphonsus Medical Center-Baker City for treatment.

Maldonado wrote in his report that he found tire tracks in Melchior's yard that were consistent with her account of the incident. He also found a broken side mirror, and broken glass, in the street. He wrote that he inspected Gonzales' pickup, which was missing its driver's side mirror, and that there was blood on the driver's side window. The front passenger side tire was flat, and the tire tread matched the tracks in Melchior's yard, Maldonado wrote.



Samantha O'Connor/Baker City Herald

Dennis Bachman organized the rally Thursday evening, Sept. 16 at Geiser-Pollman Park.

## RALLY

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"Our founding fathers may have had some differing religious opinions but they agreed when they wrote the Constitution that the rights it lined out for protection are God-given," McQuisten wrote. "To put it another way; they are the rights we are naturally and inherently born with. The most primary of those is the right to self-preservation, to make the choices as sovereign individuals that determine whether we stay healthy and alive or not."

McQuisten wrote that her goal, by next year's election, is to feel that she has "personally done every single thing I could think of to fight back" against what she sees as government overreach.

Brenda Williams, who is Bachman's sister and lives in Central Oregon, told the crowd she is a member of People's Rights Area 5, which has a mission statement of: "Uniting neighbors to defend their families, faith, freedom and future."

"To hold on to your rights, you must claim your rights, use your rights, defend your rights, maintain your rights," Williams said. "Become a part of a like-minded group of people in your area who help defend and support one another."

Scott Stuart, described on a rally flier as a constitutional speaker, also addressed the audience.

"What we're missing today is good leadership," Stuart said. "The key to good leadership is vision, understanding the times, and foresight. Foresight is the ability to make a difficult decision, which is going to harm some people, but you need to make that decision to stop a natural outcome."

Stuart read from Oregon Revised Statute 433.416, which states, among other things, that health care workers in Oregon "shall not be required as a condition of work to be immunized under this section, unless such immunization is otherwise required by federal or state law, rule or regulation."

Stuart also talked about statistics from the Oregon Health Authority (OHA) about the number of Oregonians who have died after testing positive for COVID-19.

As of Thursday, the total was 3,547.

"But when you go into OHA's website and you look at the statistics, underneath comorbidities — comorbidities means people who had death type injuries or illnesses; heart disease, liver, cancer, stroke, high blood pressure, renal failure, all these things," Scott said. "Do you know how many of those people died with those issues? 94%. Do you know what the average age of the people that have died in Oregon is? 78. Do you know what the average lifespan in America is? 78."

Scott contends that COVID-19 regulations such as the vaccination mandate are not about public safety, but about "ideological control."

"And the sooner you realize it, the sooner you begin to fight back, and we are not about fighting back physically," Scott said. "We are about fighting back with peaceful noncompliance. Understand that. Peaceful noncompliance. We will not comply."

Suzi Smith of Baker City attended the rally and said she thought it was a wonderful event.

"The best thing (Scott) said was we've lived in the land of the free, so we don't know what our rights are because we take them for granted and so it's important for all of us to not take those for granted and to know what they are," Smith said.

Another audience member, Casey Johnson, said he thinks it's important the people understand their rights and recognize government overreach.

"Like the speaker said, 'Do you know what your rights are? Can anybody tell me what those five rights are?'" Johnson said. "And nobody could tell him, so how do you know you've lost anything? I think something like this seems very small in grassroots but that's how things start and hopefully we continue to build on it."

## BREW

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"The development of Moxee Water has been a fun project for our brew team led by Eli Dickison," Brown said.

Dickison was picked as brewmaster of the year at the 2013 Great American Beer Festival, which takes place in Denver.

Brown said he and his fellow brewers didn't attend this year's event.

But they watched a live-cast of the Sept. 10 awards ceremony while sipping, appropriately, Moxee Water

at Barley Brown's Tap House on Main Street in Baker City.

"It was fun," Brown said. "We haven't had a whole lot to celebrate the last couple of years."

Brown was also excited about Moxee Water's gold medal because it's one of two beers brewed at Barley Brown's that uses as a chief ingredient barley malted by Gold Rush Malt in Baker City.

The business, started in 2016 by Tom Hutchison, won gold medals for two of his malts at the annual Craft Malt Conference in February 2021.

Brown said Dickison took it as something of a challenge to concoct a session-style IPA.

IPAs typically have a higher alcohol content than, say, lagers, often in the 6% to 8% by volume range.

But session beers have an alcohol content below 5%.

The idea is that a person can quaff a couple of beers in one "session" — hence the name.

Brown said Dickison and the other brewers "focused on crafting a light, dry, easy drinking beer that has the hop presentation of an IPA, but is low in both alcohol and calories."

"The excellent quality malt that we get from Gold Rush made it easy to get bright clean flavors," Brown said. "I'm incredibly proud to see this beer that's developed a great following locally be awarded a gold medal at the biggest beer competition in the world."

Barley Brown's produced its first batch of Moxee Water in 2018.

Brown said the beer's name actually came from an employee of a hops company based near Yakima.

He said he keeps a list of potential beer names.

## SCHOOLS

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Witty said Friday that although he doesn't have exact numbers, he believes the mandate might have been a "contributing factor" in several recent resignations. "It's very minimal," he said.

Witty said that although the district hasn't required employees to disclose their vaccination status, he believes, based on conversations with union officials and other staff members, that the vaccination rate among district workers is likely in the 70% range.

Witty said some district workers are in the process of being vaccinated.

Those who decline to be vaccinated before Oct. 18 can either submit a medical exception, which requires documentation from a physician, or a religious exception, Witty said.

He said he intends to accept religious exceptions.

"I don't want anyone to make a mockery of this process," Witty said. "But I'm

not going to be standing as a judge of that. That's out of my purview."

The district's requirement for employees who remain unvaccinated after Oct. 18 applies to both union members and nonunion employees, Witty said.

Unvaccinated workers who choose a medical or religious exemption will have another choice to make if they want to continue to work, Witty said.

Those employees can either wear an N95 face mask, or take a weekly COVID-19 home test, both of which the district will supply.

(Masks and tests will also be available to vaccinated employees, Witty said.)

District employees are already required to wear a face mask while at work indoors. Witty said the N95 masks are an alternative because they are more effective at blocking respiratory droplets that can contain virus particles.

Workers who choose the test option will still be required to wear some type of face mask while indoors.

Those employees will have to take the first test at home

on Monday, Oct. 18, and the district will send the tests to a lab in Corvallis, which projects results will be emailed to the employees within 24 hours.

Those employees will be allowed to work while the test results are pending, Witty said.

Unvaccinated employees who choose either the mask or test option will continue to work in their current job, Witty said; there will not be reassignments.

## Quarantining

After three weeks of in-person classes, Witty said he's generally pleased with the district's situation.

As of Thursday, only one staff member was quarantining due to either a positive test or possible exposure to someone who was infected, Witty said. That's down from five staff members earlier in the month.

"That's a really positive number to me," Witty said. "It shows that if we follow the protocols we can keep staff in place and continue to provide the service we want to provide."

Witty said some students at each school, except Keating, are quarantining, but that the effects are limited.

"I know it's challenging for families, and my heart goes out to them," Witty said. "A lot of work has gone into the first three weeks. We have shown we can continue to keep our schools functioning, and have extracurricular activities."

According to the most recent weekly outbreak report from the Oregon Health Authority, released on Wednesday, Sept. 15, COVID-19 cases in Baker schools include:

- Brooklyn Primary, three students, most recent onset Sept. 8
- Haines Elementary, four students, one staff, most recent onset Sept. 5
- Baker Early Learning Center, two students, most recent onset Sept. 4
- Baker High School, two students, one staff, most recent onset Sept. 2
- Baker Middle School, two students, most recent onset Sept. 8
- South Baker Intermediate, one staff member, most recent onset Aug. 25

## WOLVES

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"This pack has made a shift in their behavior," Brown said. "Instead of the occasional opportunistic killing of a vulnerable calf, now they are targeting livestock despite the high numbers of elk and deer in the area where the depredations have occurred and extensive human presence to haze wolves."

"Previously we avoided removing an adult to keep the pack intact and give the breeding adults a chance to raise the remaining juveniles and to change their depredation behavior," Brown said. "We know it's hard for some to accept any killing of wolves let alone the juveniles, but we structured it this way to try to keep the pack intact. Unfortunately, this did not have the desired effect and we are now out of options for this pack to stop depredating on livestock."

By targeting the breeding male, ODFW hopes to allow the breeding female to raise any remaining juveniles. Reducing the number of juveniles she will need to feed increases the likelihood that some will survive, according to the agency.

There is evidence that the Lookout Mountain pack

is focused on livestock even though deer and elk are common and often seen in the same areas where depredations are occurring, according to ODFW. Wolves' preferred prey, elk, are abundant in this unit and currently well over the population management objective set by ODFW.

The agency has struggled to reduce elk numbers through hunting, in part because a significant percentage of elk in the Lookout Mountain unit congregate on private land, some of which is not open to most hunters. The unit is 62% private land, a higher percentage than any of the three other units in Baker County.

According to ODFW, the Lookout Mountain pack "presents a significant risk to livestock in the area — a risk that will continue as livestock will be present all winter. September and October also tend to have higher depredation rates historically on cattle in large rangeland pastures."

Wolves were in the area for two years with little direct conflict with livestock, according to ODFW. The situation changed in February 2021 when wolves started visiting livestock calving pastures. Ranchers increased night checks, installed fladry (a type of



Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife/Contributed Photo

A trail cam photo from May 30, 2021, of one of the two yearling wolves in the Lookout Mountain pack.

fencing designed to deter wolves), and hazed wolves from near their calving and winter pastures but depredations began in mid-July and have continued.

Ranchers have repeatedly shot at wolves chasing their livestock, which is allowed under Oregon's "caught in the act" statute, but missed, according to ODFW.

ODFW staff have spent over 120 hours on the ground in the Lookout Mountain area since July 30 to try to remove the yearlings and supplement human presence efforts to move wolves away from livestock. Livestock producers have spent hundreds more hours, according to ODFW.

There is no evidence that the wolves are being attracted to pastures or other areas with livestock due to

bone piles, carcasses or other circumstances, according to ODFW. Agency workers have not identified any conditions that attract wolves and fosters conflict during its repeated investigations of depredation incidents.

Brown thanked ranchers for their efforts to try to deter wolves.

"While nine depredations in relationship to the large number of cattle raised in Oregon might seem like not that big of a deal, this situation has had a huge impact on the individual producers affected," Brown said. "Local producers have worked so hard to protect their calves for months now, going above and beyond what they were required to do under Oregon's Wolf Plan at great personal cost in time, energy, fuel, and other expenses."