

Baker City Herald

September 23, 2021

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Employment advertising section for job-seekers

SEPTEMBER 2021

Baker, Grant, Morrow, Umatilla, Union and Wallowa counties

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CHECK OUT THE OPPORTUNITIES AT BAKER COUNTY

Office Manager I—Assessors Office
Seasonal Office Assistant—Hewitt/Holcomb Parks
Community Health Nurse—Health Department
Office Manager I—Health Department
Department Assistant II—Health Department
Museum Director—Heritage & Adler Museums

INSIDE TODAY
Special section features job opportunities in the county and region.

QUICK HITS

Good Day Wish To A Subscriber
A special good day to Herald subscriber Tom Jeffords of Baker City.

BRIEFING

Family Literacy Night Saturday at Calvary Baptist
A family literacy night event is planned for Saturday, Sept. 25 at 6:30 p.m. at Calvary Baptist Church, Third and Broadway streets in Baker City. Please bring a favorite children's book. Participants will read, play games, and have milk and cookies. Books donated by the Baker County Community Literacy Coalition.

WEATHER

Today
74 / 33
Sunny

Friday
79 / 39
Sunny

Full forecast on the back of the B section.

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



Jayson Jacoby/Baker City Herald

A harvester pours potatoes into a truck in a field at Blatchford Farms in Baker Valley on Tuesday morning, Sept. 21. The machine dumps 30,000 pounds of spuds into the truck in about three minutes.

Harvest Time

By **JAYSON JACOBY**
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The final morning of summer comes cloudless to the Baker Valley, the brown sedimentary slopes of the nearby Elkhorns seemingly etched against the dark blue background, and below, at Blatchford Farms, a mechanical ballet has begun.

This is not a typical ballet, to be sure. In place of the soft soothing strains of an orchestra there is the atonal rumble of diesel trucks and the clatter of conveyor belts.

Instead of clean shoes sliding across polished wood there is a haze of dust and the crunch of leather boots and waist-high tires on gravel.

Yet the movements of the massive machines have about them a certain grace, a fluidity and a precision that suggest the thorough preparation that precedes all sorts of performances on all sorts of stages.

There is, however, no audience here.

The annual potato harvest at Blatchford Farms, in the heart of the valley about nine miles northwest of Baker City, happens without spectators.

Tuesday morning, Sept. 21, was the second day of a harvest that Jess Blatchford expects will take 12 or 13 days.

During that time his crew of about a dozen workers, some operating a harvester or windrower in the fields, some driving spud-laden trucks, some working in the massive dome-shaped storage cellars, will gather potatoes from 550 acres.

As soon as one truck backs into its assigned spot, Blatchford pushes a conveyor belt into place. The driver opens the back of the truck and a brown flood begins to tumble onto the belt, a constant hollow cacophony.

Each truck holds about 30,000 pounds of potatoes, Blatchford said. And it takes just about three minutes to fill a truck out in the field.

Ideally, Blatchford said, the first truck of the day rolls in around 8 a.m. The crew usually finishes by around 6 p.m. The conditions on this day, at the cusp of the transition between seasons, is pretty near perfect for bringing in the crop, Blatchford said.

Hardly a breath of wind. The temperature dipped below freezing — this is one of the low spots in the



Jayson Jacoby/Baker City Herald

Jess Blatchford checks the internal temperature of a potato before it moves into a storage cellar on Tuesday, Sept. 21.

valley and thus a cold one, since cold air, being relatively heavy, tends to pool in depressions — but it wasn't chilly enough to make the newly dug potatoes susceptible to bruising, Blatchford said.

And with the afternoon temperature predicted to rise only into the low 70s, he said there's little risk that the spuds' interior temperature will get too warm. If the pulp temperature hits about 70, it can be difficult for the potatoes to cool off sufficiently as they pile up inside the cellar. Every half hour or so

Blatchford plucks a few spuds from the conveyor belt and pierces them with a handheld thermometer. Around 9:15 a.m. on Tuesday, the pulp temperature was running between 48 and 50, which he said is fine.

The ideal harvest conditions are particularly welcome, Blatchford said, following a growing season that was decidedly not ideal.

During the record-setting heatwave the last week of June, potatoes essentially went into dormancy, he said. He expects yields will be down about 15% from usual.

Restaurants qualify for COVID aid

Businesses could potentially receive nearly \$3 million

By **JAYSON JACOBY**
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A total of 11 Baker City restaurant and bar owners who sustained financial losses due to the COVID-19 pandemic could receive nearly \$3 million in

federal grants. The Small Business Administration announced this summer that it had approved more than half a billion dollars in Restaurant Revitalization Fund grants to about 2,300 Oregon food and drink businesses.

The fund ran out of its allocation in early July, but industry groups and

others, including a member of Oregon's congressional delegation, are lobbying for Congress to restart the program with \$60 billion.

According to the Small Business Administration, there were far more applications during the initial round than there was money available. Oregon had almost 5,000 businesses apply for

grants, totaling \$1.2 billion, more than twice the amount businesses in the state have been approved for.

The Restaurant Revitalization Fund (RRF) was part of the American Rescue Plan Act that Congress approved, and President Biden signed, in March.

See, Restaurants / Page A3

Baker County tourism manager takes job with city of La Grande

Baker City Herald
Timothy Bishop, who has been Baker County's contracted tourism marketing director for the past 11 years, has been hired as the economic development director for the city of La Grande.

Bishop will continue in his position with Baker County

Tourism through Oct. 15, according to a press release.

He is scheduled to start the new job for La Grande on Oct. 21.

Bishop worked as the downtown manager for Historic Baker City Inc. in the 1990s, and then worked on downtown revitalizations

in Walla Walla, Washington, and Ellensburg, Washington.

He said he's eager to start his new position in La Grande.

"As a small college town in Eastern Oregon with an emerging tourism industry, La Grande feels very similar to other communities that

I've worked in like Ellensburg and Walla Walla," Bishop said. "I'm excited to join the economic development team and am looking forward to helping the City of La Grande develop a stronger and more resilient local economy as we work through the post COVID recovery."

Three more COVID-19 deaths

Baker City Herald
Three Baker County residents died in a seven-day period earlier this month after testing positive for COVID-19.

Those deaths bring the September total to four, and the county's total during the pandemic to 23.

The Oregon Health Authority reported two deaths on Wednesday, Sept. 22.

• A 70-year-old man who tested positive on Sept. 3 died on Sept. 18 at Saint Alphonsus Medical Center in Boise. The presence of underlying medical conditions is being investigated.

• An 83-year-old man who tested positive on Sept. 3 died on Sept. 16 at Saint Alphonsus Medical Center in Boise. The presence of underlying medical conditions is being investigated.

The county's 21st COVID-related death was reported on Tuesday, Sept. 21. A 62-year-old man who tested positive on Sept. 8 died on Sept. 12 at his residence, according to OHA. The presence of underlying medical conditions is being investigated.

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Free firewood cutting on national forests starting in 2022

Baker City Herald
People who cut firewood on national forests in Northeastern Oregon for their own use, but not for sale, will no longer have to pay for cutting permits starting in 2022.

The Forest Service announced this week that it is transitioning to a free personal use firewood system for national forests in the Pacific Northwest.

The current cost for firewood permits is \$5 per cord.

People who want to sell firewood they cut on national forests can buy permits for \$5 per cord.

See, Firewood / Page A6

Durkee RV park tenants file lawsuit

Tenants say water was illegally turned off

By **JAYSON JACOBY**
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Four residents at a mobile home and RV park in Durkee who say the park's owner shut off their water have filed a lawsuit seeking a court order requiring that the owner turn the water on.

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SATURDAY — NEW NONPROFIT SEEKS TO HELP CHILDREN, PARENTS