

## COVID

*Continued from A1*

A 72-year-old Baker County woman died Sept. 7 at her residence, according to OHA.

Her death was the first reported in the county since Aug. 19.

Baker County Commissioner Mark Bennett said in a press release Wednesday: "I hope for solace for all of the families who are grieving in our community right now. This many deaths reported inside a week is a hard blow for our small community."

The four deaths during September coincide with a record-setting number of infections in the county.

From Sept. 1-21, the county had 355 cases, an average of 16.9 per day.

The previous record was set in August 2021, when there were 300 cases.

The previous record was 196 cases in December 2020.

While the statewide rate of cases per 100,000 population dropped by 14.3% for the week ending Sept. 18, Baker County set a record with 139 new cases that week.

The county's case rate per 100,000 rose by 8.6%, to 822, the fourth-highest rate among Oregon's 36 counties.

Each of the 23 county residents who died after testing positive was 59 or older.

A majority of cases this month, however, have been in people younger than 50. That age range accounted for 72% of the county's cases from Sept. 1-15, according to the Baker County Health Department.

## RESTAURANTS

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The program is designed to help businesses continue operating by compensating them for revenue losses caused by shutdowns and other pandemic-related issues.

Businesses don't have to repay the money so long as they use their grant for eligible purposes by March 11, 2023.

Baker City's biggest recipient is Windmill Enterprises, the business owned by the Brown family that includes Barley Brown's Brew Pub and Tap House, and Sumpter Junction restaurant.

Windmill Enterprises was approved for a grant of almost \$1.25 million.

Tyler Brown, who operates the brew pub and tap house on Main Street, said he understands that "sounds like a lot."

But he said the grant, which is based on the company's operating losses in 2020 compared with 2019, doesn't include unrealized profit.

Brown said his family's business will still end up losing a significant amount of money due to the pandemic.

One of their restaurants — Sumpter Junction, on Campbell Street near the freeway — closed in March 2020, at the start of the pandemic, and has not reopened.

For much of the pandemic, Brown said it didn't make economic sense to open Sumpter Junction given state-imposed limitations on the number of customers.

Right now, he said, it's difficult to find enough employees to operate the brew pub and tap house.

Even procuring enough food through suppliers has been challenging recently, Brown said.

He said he recently ordered 100 cases of food but received only 60.

"Everything's messed up in the supply chain," Brown said.

Brown also pointed out that the pandemic has affected not only his family's restaurants, but also the

brewery, what he called a "double hit." When restaurants and bars were closed during parts of 2020, and limited in occupancy for more than a year stretching into 2021, demand for Barley Brown's beer, which is served in restaurants and bars across Oregon and in Idaho, all but evaporated, he said.

Many of those financial losses weren't eligible to be included with the Restaurant Revitalization Fund application, Brown said.

That said, he is grateful that the RRF was created, and that his family's business qualified.

"It's a lot of money," Brown said. "I'm confident that it will allow us to move ahead and continue to operate. But there's a lot of problems money doesn't solve. It takes so much time to rebuild a business."

According to the Small Business Administration, RRF money can be used for a variety of purposes, including:

- Business payroll costs (including sick leave)
- Payments on any business mortgage obligation
- Business rent payments (this does not include prepayment of rent)
- Business debt service, both principal and interest (this does not include any prepayment of principal or interest)
- Business utility payments
- Business maintenance expenses
- Construction of outdoor seating
- Business supplies (including protective equipment and cleaning materials)
- Business food and beverage expenses (including raw materials)
- Covered supplier costs
- Business operating expenses

### Other qualifying businesses

Barbara Sidway, who owns the Geiser Grand Hotel and Restaurant with her husband, Dwight, said she "very appreciative of all the government programs," including the RRF, which approved \$224,000 for the Sidways' company, Grand History LLC.

"It's not going to make us whole, but I'm not bitter about it," Barbara Sidway said. "Life happens."

Sidway said she is eager to use the grant to continue operating the business that the couple started when they bought the decrepit Geiser Grand, built in 1889, and restored it over the next several years.

"We are committed to surviving and thriving and getting back to where we were before the pandemic started," Sidway said. "This program and others are going to help us get there."

Both Sidway and Brown said they feel badly for the hundreds of business owners who didn't receive a grant before the fund was depleted. They said they hope Congress replenishes the program.

"The restaurant business really took it on the chin compared with other industries," Sidway said.

The Oregon Restaurant and Lodging Association is among those urging Congress to pony up money for a second round of the RRF.

"We're certainly working with our national partners, national restaurant association to try to replenish the restaurant revitalization," said Greg Astley, director of government affairs for the Association. "We're hoping that more money will be made available again. This didn't happen overnight. It's not going to be solved overnight. And even as we can reopen right now, we know that operators are facing a problem with getting people back to work."

Restrictions during the pandemic have affected restaurants and other related businesses in a variety of ways.

Travis Cook, who owns Copper Belt Winery in the Keating Valley, said his tasting room on Main Street in Baker City depends on walk-in traffic, with that accounting for about 65% to 70% of its business.

"People come in off the interstate — they taste our wine, then they buy our wine," he said.

But the tasting room was closed for most of 2020.

"We were pretty well closed for the duration," Cook said.

His only business was bottle sales to-go, by appointment. Restrictions prohibited on-site tastings.

Due to this, he didn't bottle as much wine as he normally would, between February and late April of this year.

"Last year I thought, 'let's see where this goes,'" he said. "I'm just starting to bottle and get inventory back."

The tasting room is now open seven days a week. During the pandemic, he added space next door to the building he shares with The Cheese Fairy, owned by his sister Cody Cook. This extra space helped when restrictions began to ease.

"Our tasting room was easy to overcrowd," he said.

Cody Cook said that from March through August of 2020, she could only sell chunks of cheese or pre-orders — and a bulk of her business is customers who come in and sit down.

But people still came, even if her offerings were limited. And many ordered gifts of cheese for the holidays.

"I wouldn't have survived without the local support," she said.

The Cheese Fairy received \$28,240 through the RRF, and Copper Belt Winery \$18,823.

Other Baker City businesses that qualified for grants, according to the Small Business Administration (the SBA database does not list which applicants have received, or spent, money):

- Aaron Schierman (owner, Lone Pine Cafe): \$449,289
- Rising Sun Palace Inc., \$377,877
- Frontier Restaurant LLC, \$210,094
- Latitude 45 Grille LLC: \$186,960
- AJ's Corner Brick Bar & Grill LLC: \$160,044
- Danjo Holdings LLC (Charlie's Ice Cream), \$13,295
- Ed's Idle Hour LLC (Idle Hour tavern), \$13,045

*Lisa Britton contributed to this story, along with Davis Carbaugh of The (La Grande) Observer.*

## OBITUARIES

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Her favorite story to tell was when she was on her ex-husband's ship in the ocean, and pirates came and took over controls of their ship and they had to take off in the boat they had been towing with the ship.

She was a wonderful gardener of plants inside and out. Her granddaughter, Ashleigh, would call her the "plant doctor," as she could bring any plant back to life. Laura had a love for music such as opera, country, '80s genre and, of course, her "Hope Floats" soundtrack.

Laura was a hippie at heart, and she will be remembered wearing her capris and ankle bracelets. She had a love for everyone, regardless of their background, color of their skin, or religion. She had a deep connection with her dog, Dutchy B, and all other pets that she was around. Her memory will be treasured for all the days of our lives (which was also her favorite soap opera!).

Laura is survived by her children, John Beatty and Colleen Klassen; granddaughter Ashleigh King-Price and grandson-in-law Taylor Price; great-grandchildren McKynzie, Olivia, and Lincoln; sisters Cindy Shuckle and Vicky Watson-Worsham; her nieces and nephews include Rick Watson, Rhonda Watson-Yanez, Justin Watson, Michelle Watson, Tracy Fass, Todd Beatty, Chris Beatty, Holly Hardesty, Little Rhonda Yanez, Erica Watson, Vorzheva Yanez, Damien Yanez, Devin Yanez, Alexis Watson, Kasey Watson, Enola Watson, Dallas Hardesty, Coby Beatty, Dwight Beatty, Tessa Banister, Gabriel Banister and Eli Banister.

Laura was preceded in death by her mother and father, Frank and Alpha Watson; her brothers, William "Skip"

Watson, Jerry Watson and Rodger Watson; her sister, Judy Bingham; her niece, Kimberly Bingham; and her nephews, Joshua Hardesty and William "Will" Watson.

In her later days, her biggest desire was to dance again, and she worried that she would never get the chance to do so. We know she is dancing in heaven to God's beautiful choir, without pain and a great, big smile on her face, her family said.

She loved her family and friends, and we loved her back — as she would say, "love you long time."

A note from the family of Laura Mae Watson:

On September 11, 2021, we lost our loving mother. Our hearts are heavy, and we now have to say goodbye. In her time on Earth, she was full of life and has seen and done many things, from her travels to Louisiana, Germany, and everywhere in between, before settling in Oregon. To all our family and friends, we want to say thank you for loving her and receiving the love she gave; never will we meet another like her. Until we meet again!

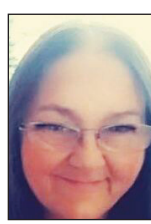
To leave an online condolence Laura's family, go to [www.grayswestco.com](http://www.grayswestco.com).

### Vicki Profitt

Baker City, 1965-2021

Vicki Sue Profitt, 56, of Baker City, died Sept. 5, 2021, at her home.

Vicki was born on Aug. 22, 1965, in Salem to Hershell and "Fritzi" (Bertha Ridpath) McGranahan. Vicki attended Highland High School and at the age of 30, Vicki succeeded in receiving her GED, an accomplishment she was very proud of. Vicki worked as a homecare provider/CNA for various agen-



**Vicki Profitt**

cies, as well as having many private clients she lovingly cared for. Her showing of love and giving encouragement to many

foster and runaway children helped put their lives back together. She cared about others and making sure everyone was OK.

Vicki enjoyed playing card games, coloring and sewing.

Vicki is survived by her daughters, Daisy Carrier and Trista Pauline Baker of Baker City; her grandchildren, Raven Dover, Thomas Dover, Skie Lynn Ritch, Nadia Ayasha Ritch, Savannah Rayne Ritch and Avalanna Ivory Ritch, all of Baker City.

She was preceded in death by her mother, Bertha "Fritzi" Ridpath; and her grandmother, Bertha Pauline Aldrich.

To leave an online condolence for Vicki's family, go to [www.grayswestco.com](http://www.grayswestco.com).

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**THANK YOU**

Don Burrows and his Masonic Brothers of Baker City and  
The Boise Naval Funeral Travel Team  
for helping me give my dad the honor he deserved

*Rest easy, Pops  
Much Love, Deb Sue*



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