

# Baker City Herald

September 25, 2021

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In SPORTS, A5

Tigers nip Baker boys, 1-0

IN THIS EDITION:

Local • Outdoors • Sports • TV

\$1.50

QUICK HITS

**Good Day Wish To A Subscriber**

A special good day to Herald subscriber Rob Ellingson of Baker City.

**Local, A2**

LA GRANDE — After spending more than a year dealing with in-person and hybrid learning schedules, officials with Eastern Oregon University are excited at the prospect of life resuming a more normal look on campus in 2021-22.

BRIEFING

**Tables available for annual Christmas bazaar Dec. 3-4**

Baker County is hosting the annual Christmas bazaar Dec. 3 and 4 at the Baker County Fairgrounds show barn. Tables are \$40, and there are spots available. To reserve a table, call the Baker County Extension Office at 541-523-6418.

In addition, the county is looking for volunteers to help with the bazaar. More information is available on the Baker County 4-H Facebook page, or by calling the Extension Office or emailing to khauserk@oregonstate.edu. The bazaar hours will be noon to 5:30 p.m. on Friday, Dec. 3 and 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Saturday, Dec. 4. Local artists, crafts, cooks and others will be showcasing their wares.

WEATHER

Today

83 / 39  
Sunny



Sunday

82 / 40  
Sunny



Monday

75 / 41  
Sunny



Full forecast on the back of the B section.

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

## County fears shortage of health care workers

By JAYSON JACOBY and SAMANTHA O'CONNOR  
Baker City Herald

The Baker County Board of Commissioners approved an emergency declaration on Wednesday, Sept. 22 stating that Gov. Kate Brown's vaccine mandate for health care workers could leave fire departments in the county so understaffed, as workers quit rather than take the vaccine, that they won't be able to respond to traffic crashes and other emergency calls.

The declaration also stated that the mandate could render Saint Alphonsus Medical Center-Baker City unable to provide basic hospital care.

But the claim about the potential effects on Baker County's only hospital is wrong, hospital officials said on Thursday, Sept. 23. They called on the county to retract that part of the declaration.

Baker County Commissioner Mark Bennett said the county would do so.

The declaration calls on Brown to address the mandate — although it doesn't specifically propose that the governor cancel it — which sets an Oct. 18 deadline for health care



S. John Collins/Baker City Herald, File, 2018

Jason Bybee, firefighter/paramedic for the Baker City Fire Department, checks inventory in a Baker City ambulance before it's called into action in 2018.

workers, including paramedics and other emergency responders, to either be fully vaccinated or to have an approved medical or religious exception.

"The impending deadline for all health care workers to be fully vaccinated by October 18 has led to a series of difficult choices," Bennett said in a press release. "We can't head into a situation where there are not enough responders available to handle medi-

cal events throughout the county, including those that happen on the highways and interstate. We also cannot accept a situation where the hospital doesn't have sufficient staffing to provide basic hospital care. Our responsibility is to the health and safety of our community, and we have to come up with options for the inevitable times when accidents or health emergencies will occur."

The declaration states

that if the governor decides that keeping the Oct. 18 deadline in place "is too critical to public safety," then the county would request that the governor "provide aid and assistance to Baker County in the form of such State assets and resources as is necessary to protect the citizens, and visitors of Baker County, along with the users of the state highway system."

See, **Workers** / Page A6

## Baker man charged in robbery

■ Alexander Prentice Griffin accused of pointing gun at homeowner

By JAYSON JACOBY  
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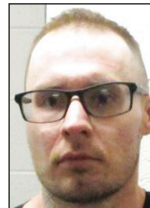
A Baker City man is accused of breaking into a home in town on Sept. 17 and then pointing a gun at the homeowner who found the suspect in the home upon returning.

Alexander Prentice Griffin, 30, of Baker City, is in the Baker County Jail, charged with first-degree robbery, first-degree burglary, menacing, and being a felon in possession of a firearm.

First-degree robbery is a Measure 11 crime in Oregon, which on conviction carries a mandatory minimum prison sentence of seven years and six months.

The investigation into Griffin started two days earlier, on Sept. 15, when Baker City Police received a report of a burglary at a vacant home and shed at 2610 Clark St., according to a press release from Baker City Police Chief Ty DUBY.

Police learned that an



Griffin

estimated \$10,000 in miscellaneous tools, along with copper items, had been taken. Police also found out that someone had sold copper items, matching the description of those taken from the Clark Street property, that day at B&K Auto Salvage and Recycling in Baker City, according to the press release.

See, **Robbery** / Page A3

## Driver arrested after high-speed chase

By JAYSON JACOBY  
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A Baker City man was arrested Tuesday afternoon, Sept. 21, after leading police from multiple agencies on a vehicle chase with speeds that at times exceeded 100 mph.

Zachary Charles Persicke, 36, of 2690 Ninth St., surrendered to police and was arrested without incident about noon along Interstate 84 at Milepost 330, about 26 miles southeast of Baker City near the Ash Grove Cement plant.

Persicke was jailed on a parole violation warrant, according to a press release from Baker City Police Chief Ty DUBY.

On Thursday, Sept. 23, a Baker County grand jury indicted Persicke on multiple charges, including attempting to elude a police officer, and unlawful possession and

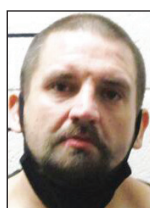
delivery of methamphetamine and heroin.

Persicke's bail was set at \$215,000. He is scheduled to enter a plea on Sept. 29 at 1 p.m. in Baker County Circuit Court.

The drug charges stemmed from an investigation by the Baker County Narcotics Enforcement Team, which yielded about a pound of suspected methamphetamine, multiple ounces of heroin, and opioid pills from Persicke's car.

Police also found a loaded Glock .45-caliber pistol on the passenger seat, and a loaded Smith and Wesson AR-15 rifle with a 60-round capacity magazine in the vehicle's trunk.

Police later served a search warrant on Persicke's



Persicke

home, where they found about half a pound of methamphetamine, several grams of heroin, a sawed-off 12-gauge shotgun and three handguns.

Persicke is charged with being a felon in possession of a firearm.

The incident started about 11 a.m. on Tuesday when Baker City Police detectives, and an Oregon State Police sergeant, tried to stop a white Chevrolet Monte Carlo as part of an ongoing investigation by the Narcotics Enforcement Team into drug and gun trafficking.

Persicke, who was driving the Monte Carlo, stopped for police at Atwood Road and East Campbell Street, east of Interstate 84. The three passengers in the car fled on foot, according to the press release.

Persicke drove away, with police in pursuit.

He initially drove north of Interstate 84 beyond North Powder to the Wolf Creek exit, near Milepost 283. Persicke exceeded 100 mph at times, according to the press release.

Near North Powder, Persicke used his cellphone to call 911 and make what the press release describes as "lethal force threats towards law enforcement that was pursuing him."

The emergency dispatcher tried to negotiate with Persicke, and persuaded him to slow his vehicle to around 80 mph.

At the Wolf Creek exit Persicke exited the freeway and then returned to I-84, headed south toward Baker City.

Officers from Baker City and OSP continued the pur-

suit, at speeds ranging from 75 to 90 mph.

Baker City Police deployed a spike strip near Baker City, which flattened one tire on Persicke's car. He slowed to between 60 and 70 mph but continued driving south on the freeway. He exited at the Campbell Street exit but then returned to the freeway, heading toward Durkee.

During the pursuit, officers from the Baker County Parole and Probation Department went to Persicke's home, where they met with his mother and his girlfriend. They called Persicke's cellphone and convinced him to pull over and surrender.

The Baker City Police Department was assisted by the Baker County Sheriff's Office, Baker County Parole and Probation, Union County Sheriff's Office, and Oregon State Police.

See, **COVID** / Page A3



TODAY  
Issue 59, 12 pages

Classified ..... B2-B4  
Comics ..... B5  
Community News ..... A3

Crossword ..... B3 & B4  
Dear Abby ..... B6  
Horoscope ..... B3 & B4

Jayson Jacoby ..... A4  
News of Record ..... A2  
Obituaries ..... A2

Opinion ..... A4  
Outdoors ..... B1 & B2  
Senior Menus ..... A2

Sports ..... A5  
Turning Backs ..... A3  
Weather ..... B6

TUESDAY — NEIGHBORS CONCERNED ABOUT LACK OF STOP SIGNS