



In OUTDOORS, B1

Sampling Strawberry Mountain Wilderness

Baker City Herald

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QUICK HITS

Good Day Wish To A Subscriber

A special good day to Herald subscriber Kathy Rayl of Baker City.

BRIEFING

Haines Fire Protection board meets Oct. 11

The Haines Fire Protection District's board of directors will meet on Monday, Oct. 11 at 7 p.m. at the main fire station, 816 Cole St. in Haines. Government grants, mandates and website development are on the agenda. All residents within the district are welcome to attend. COVID-19 safety protocols will be in effect.

Baker County Garden Club to meet Wednesday, Oct. 6 at 11 a.m.

The Baker County Garden Club will meet Wednesday, Oct. 6 at 11 a.m. at 13816 Red Fox Lane. A lunch of soup, salad and bread will be provided. Please bring a chair and a beverage.

The surprise program will be given by David Cowan, master gardener.

For those who want to carpool, please meet at Ace Nursery on Pocahontas Road at 10:30 a.m.

WEATHER

Today
75 / 31
Sunny

Sunday
77 / 33
Sunny

Monday
79 / 36
Sunny

Full forecast on the back of the B section.

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

STICKY SCIENCE

■ Baker High School students go outside to learn — and make s'mores

By LISA BRITTON

lbritton@bakercityherald.com

The morning sunshine chased the shivers away — or maybe it was simply the act of running across a meadow chasing bugs that warmed up the students from Baker High School on a chilly autumn morning.

Science classes from BHS spent Tuesday, Sept. 28 and Wednesday, Sept. 29 exploring nature during a field trip to Phillips Park, at the base of the Elkhorn Mountains, followed by lunch and hiking at Anthony Lakes.

In addition to science teachers Nicole Sullivan and Tim Smith, students heard from local experts on forest health and insects.

"The main focus is to get them outside and enjoying nature. And to identify some species," Sullivan said.



Lisa Britton/Baker City Herald

Olivia Baker, right, and Mikana Clark head into a meadow to catch insects during a science field trip to Phillips Park.

Tuesday's trip was for students in advanced biology, advanced ecology and environmental science. Wednesday included students from biology and general science classes.

Each group moved through the various stations.

At Sullivan's stop, the students piled sticks in areas where the landowners can later burn the extra fuel. Each group took a selfie with their pile, and she awarded a prize for the biggest stack. Once done with that task, each student selected a stick for roast-

ing marshmallows at the s'mores station.

(Where nearly every student immediately burned the mallow and happily consumed the blackened, sticky mess sandwiched with chocolate and graham crackers.)

"Story Time with Steve" featured a talk with Steve Edwards, who explained the difference between a managed forest and a stand of trees that is not thinned or cleared of underbrush — and what that can mean for the health of the trees.

"The root system is two times the diameter (of the crown)," he said. "That tree and this tree are competing."

At the insect station with Lia Spiegel, an entomologist with the U.S. Forest Service, the teenagers looked at samples of tree bark and the beetles that burrow inside.

"Every tree has a different beetle, and a different pattern under the bark," she said. "I don't study bugs exactly — I study the forest and why trees are dying."



Lisa Britton/Baker City Herald

During rotations during a science field trip this week, Baker High School students used watercolors to paint something from nature.

See, **Science** / Page A5



Jayson Jacoby/Baker City Herald

A new child care center is set to open by the end of October at the Baker Early Learning Center.

Day care center set to open soon

By SAMANTHA O'CONNOR

soconnor@bakercityherald.com

A new child care center is slated to open by the end of October at the Baker Early Learning Center (BELC) at the North Baker School property at 2725 Seventh St.

The Baker County YMCA will operate the child care facility, which is in a pair of

modular buildings northwest of North Baker School.

The modulators were moved from Brooklyn Primary School.

There will be space for 40 children, including an infant and toddler room with space for eight to 10 kids, said Patty Shukle, the new center's director.



Shukle

See, **Day Care** / Page A5

SWAT team called after theft of gun

By JAYSON JACOBY

jjacoby@bakercityherald.com

A regional SWAT team was summoned Thursday afternoon, Sept. 30, to search an area east of Interstate 84 in Baker City for a person suspected of stealing a gun during a home burglary.

The team didn't find anyone during the search, which ended just before 8 p.m. Thursday, Baker County Sheriff Travis Ash said on Friday morning.

Police from multiple agencies set up a perimeter in the area along Atwood Road, between Highway 86 and East

Campbell Street, and notified residents of about four homes in the area, asking them to lock their doors, Ash said.

Police have identified a potential suspect, Ash said.

On Friday morning the Sheriff's Office released two photos of a Ford pickup truck that was parked in the driveway of the home where the burglary happened.

The incident started a little after 4 p.m. when Jim Rex arrived at his home at 42140 Atwood Road.

See, **SWAT** / Page A5

COVID death toll 6 for September

By JAYSON JACOBY

jjacoby@bakercityherald.com

Baker County's worst month in terms of COVID-19 cases and deaths concluded Thursday, Sept. 30 with a report that a 63-year-old Baker County man had died on Sept. 24 at the VA Medical Center in Boise, after testing positive on Sept. 3.

His death was the sixth COVID-19-related fatality among county residents during the month, and the 25th overall during the pandemic.

The previous record for a month was four deaths, in March 2021. There were three deaths in February 2021.

In a press release in response to the death of the 63-year-old man, Nancy Staten, director of the Baker County Health Department, said: "All of us here at the Health Department offer our condolences and our hopes for solace for his loved ones. This surge in cases has also brought a wave of losses for the county, and my heart goes out to each and every family member and friend who is grieving right now."

The Health Department reported 12 new cases on Thursday, bringing September's total to 465.

The previous monthly high was 300 cases, in August 2021.

September's total more than doubles what had been, until August, the monthly maximum — 196 cases during December 2020.

In the press release, Staten urged residents to take precautions, including getting vaccinated, noting that the virus poses a threat to people of all ages, whether or not they have underlying health issues.

"While it's still true that those with underlying health conditions are most likely to have complications, we're seeing very healthy people without underlying conditions end up very sick and hospitalized," Staten said. "It's not inevitable. If we all take simple steps — stay home when you're sick, wash your hands frequently, avoid social situations where the virus can spread easily, and get vaccinated — we can do a lot to keep ourselves and each other safe."

Breakthrough cases

The Oregon Health Authority released its weekly report Thursday about breakthrough cases — infections in people who are fully vaccinated.

Baker County's breakthrough case percentage rose during the most recent week for which numbers are available, Sept. 19-25.

Of the 86 cases that week, 18 were breakthrough cases, according to OHA — 20.9%.

The breakthrough case rate the previous week was 10.8% — 15 of 139 cases.

Baker County's breakthrough case rate remains lower than the statewide average during the surge in infections caused by the more contagious delta variant, however.

The county's breakthrough case percentage for the past six weeks, ending Sept. 25, was 14.7%. The statewide average during that period was 20.8%.



TODAY
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TUESDAY — WEEKEND WRAP UP OF HIGH SCHOOL, COLLEGE SPORTS