



In SPORTS, A5

Ducks rally to nip Cal

Baker City Herald

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QUICK HITS

Good Day Wish To A Subscriber

A special good day to Herald subscriber Bill Quigley of Baker City.

BRIEFING

Tickets on sale for Baker City Police K9 fundraiser

Tickets went on sale Monday, Oct. 18 for the Baker City Police Department's K9 Drug Prevention Fundraiser raffle. Tickets support the department's K9 program and drug prevention efforts.

The grand prize is a 2021 Can-Am Maverick XDS RR turbo side-by-side. Second prize is a .300 Winchester Magnum hunting rifle, donated by Patton Excavation, with a Vortex Viper scope donated by D&B Supply. Third prize is a Traeger Pro 780 barbecue donated by Lew Brothers Les Schwab Tires. A maximum of 500 tickets will be sold. They're available at the Baker City Police Department, 1768 Auburn Ave., Cliff's Saws and Cycles, and Carole's Mad Dog restaurant and saloon in Sumpter. Tickets are \$100 each, and buyers must be 18 or older. The raffle drawing will take place Feb. 12, 2022. Winners need not be present to win, and they will be notified by phone and email.

BHS senior class planning party

The Baker High School senior class is raising money for its drug- and alcohol-free party. Find more information at bhs-seniorclass.com.

WEATHER

Today

63 / 44
Sunny



Wednesday

58 / 36
Rain showers



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

Vaccine mandate could limit ambulances in east county

By JAYSON JACOBY and SAMANTHA O'CONNOR
Baker City Herald

The district that provides ambulance service to the northeast corner of Baker County, including the Halfway and Oxbow areas, has notified county officials that it can't meet its minimum response time due to Oregon's COVID-19 vaccination mandate, which took effect Monday, Oct. 18.

The mandate, which Gov. Kate Brown announced in August, requires health care workers, including ambulance employees, to be vaccinated or to have an approved medical or religious exception if they are to continue treating patients.

In an Oct. 12 letter to the Baker County Board of Commissioners, Nora Aspy, chair of the Halfway/Oxbow Ambulance Service, and team

leader Dana Simrell wrote that due to the mandate, "our service is unable to meet the minimum response time of 45 minutes, 90% of the time."

The letter does not say how many employees are affected by the mandate because they're not vaccinated or don't have an exception.

Jason Yencopal, the county's emergency manager, said ambulance services, which are overseen by the

county, are required to notify the county if they anticipate a change in their service level.

The minimum response time is one such criteria, Yencopal said.

The nearest ambulance service to Halfway/Oxbow is operated by Eagle Valley, in the Richland area about 12 miles by Highway 86 from Halfway.

The Oct. 12 letter notes

that the Halfway/Oxbow ambulance service checked with Eagle Valley, and that the latter, "due to the mandates ... will not be able to provide consistent mutual aid."

The letter concludes with a request for an "ambulance and crew to help keep the response rate low for those located in our assigned service area."

See, **Mandate** / Page A3

DREADING THE DREDGE

Volunteers transform the hulking structure into a giant haunted house

By LISA BRITTON

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SUMPTER — Marsha Demaris strides in, her grin a stark contrast to the meat cleaver embedded in her skull.

"I just found this!" she says, still beaming as she removes the headband — it's just a Halloween prop, after all — and places it on the head of skeletal mannequin.

A group of about 10 volunteers stretched cobwebs, placed plas-

tic spiders and generally turned the Sumpter Dredge into a giant haunted house on Tuesday, Oct. 12.

This project, organized by Laramie Shanks, owner of the Sumpter Stockade, is for the Haunted Dredge experience scheduled for Friday, Oct. 29, from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m.

The dredge, which mined gold from the Sumpter Valley from 1935 to 1954, is the centerpiece of the Sumpter Valley Dredge State Heritage Area, managed by the Oregon

Parks and Recreation Department in Sumpter, about 27 miles west of Baker City.

Shanks rushed around, adjusting a web here, hanging a ghost there.

"Is there still a creepy mask left?" she hollers to the other workers.

This is the second year they've decorated the dredge for Halloween. They skipped 2020.

See, **Dredge** / Page A3

Lisa Britton/Baker City Herald

The Sumpter Dredge, which mined the Sumpter Valley for gold from 1935 to 1954, has been transformed inside into a giant haunted house for a free event Friday, Oct. 29.



Bi-Mart pharmacy won't reopen

By JAYSON JACOBY

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The pharmacy at the Bi-Mart store in Baker City is scheduled to close Nov. 9, and it will not be reopened under the Walgreens name.

Helen Loennig, pharmacist and pharmacy manager at the store, wrote to the Baker City Herald that when she interviewed with Walgreens, "they made it clear the closest Walgreens would be Ontario."

Bi-Mart announced on Sept. 30 that Walgreens was buying Bi-Mart's pharmacy inventories and patient prescription files at 56 stores in Oregon, Idaho and Washington.

Walgreens officials said the company would operate pharmacies, under the Walgreens name, inside some Bi-Mart stores.

Loennig said the Baker City store is not among those.

The closure is limited to the pharmacy; the Baker City Bi-Mart store will remain open.

A sign posted at the pharmacy in the Baker City store states that Nov. 9 is the last day of business for the pharmacy, and that the store will help patients transfer their prescriptions to Safeway, Rite Aid or Albertsons.

ODFW probes possible wolf attack on calf

By JAYSON JACOBY

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Biologists from the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife are investigating what could be the first wolf attack on cattle in the Lookout Mountain area in almost a month.

A possible wolf depredation was reported about 11:22 a.m. on Saturday, Oct. 16 in the Manning Creek area northeast of Durkee, according to the Baker County Sheriff's Office.

Wolves from the Lookout Mountain pack, in the eastern part of Baker County, have killed at least six head of cattle, and injured three others, since mid July.

But there haven't been any confirmed wolf attacks on cattle since ODFW employees shot and killed three wolves from the pack, including its breeding male, on Sept. 17.

See, **Wolves** / Page A3

COVID cases down 74% in past month

By JAYSON JACOBY

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The number of COVID-19 cases in Baker County has dropped for the fourth straight week, down nearly 74% from the weekly record high in mid-September.

The county reported 37 new cases from Oct. 10-16, the lowest weekly total since July 18-24, when there were six cases.

Weekly case totals for the past month or so:

- Sept. 12-18 — 139 (the county's highest weekly total during the pandemic)
- Sept. 19-25 — 86
- Sept. 26-Oct. 2 — 69
- Oct. 3-9 — 48

The number of COVID-19 tests done in the county has also declined over the past month, although not as rapidly as the number of infections.

Weekly test totals:

- Sept. 12-18 — 580; test positivity rate of 23.8%
- Sept. 19-25 — 383; test positivity rate of 22.2%
- Sept. 26-Oct. 2 — 370; test positivity rate of 19.2%
- Oct. 3-9 — 329; test positivity rate of 18.2%
- Oct. 10-16 — 224 (preliminary figure); test positivity rate of 10.7%

With three new cases reported on Sunday, Oct. 17, the first day of the new reporting week, October's total was at 95 cases, an average of 5.6 per day.

September set records with 465 cases and a daily average of 15.5.

August ranks second in both categories, with 300 cases and a daily average of 10.

"We're clearly pleased to see our case counts decline

four weeks in a row, and the total cases for this week are less than half of what they were in the week ending September 25," said Nancy Staten, director of the Baker County Health Department. "The Health Department is grateful to everyone in the community who is taking precautions to keep themselves and others healthy. The virus is still very much at large in our community, so everyone needs to keep their guard up — we'd really like to not see another spike before or during the holidays."

Breakthrough cases

These infections in fully vaccinated people are accounting for an increasing percentage of the county's total.

According to the most re-

cent weekly report from the Oregon Health Authority (OHA), 12 of Baker County's 48 cases from Oct. 3-9 were breakthrough cases, a rate of 25%.

That's an increase from the 23.2% breakthrough rate from Sept. 2-Oct. 2 (16 of 69 cases), 20.9% from Sept. 19-25 (18 of 86) and 10.8% from Sept. 12-18 (15 of 139).

Vaccination rate

Baker County's vaccination rate is the sixth-lowest among Oregon's 36 counties, with 52.4% of residents 18 and older vaccinated.

The statewide average is 76.3%.

Baker County's seven-day running average of vaccine doses administered per day has dropped from 29 on Sept. 29 to 13 as of Oct. 14.



TODAY
Issue 69, 12 pages

CalendarA2
Classified B2-B4
Comics B5

Community NewsA3
CrosswordB2 & B4
Dear Abby B6

HomeB1 & B2
HoroscopesB3 & B4
Letters A4

Lottery ResultsA2
News of RecordA3
ObituariesA2

OpinionA4
Sports A5 & A6
Weather B6

THURSDAY — SPECIAL SECTION LOOKS AT EFFECTS OF THE DROUGHT