

Local

TURNING BACK THE PAGES

50 YEARS AGO

from the Democrat-Herald

January 6, 1972

Canyon City's Jim Sproul dominated the winner's circle in the Sumpster Valley Days snowmobile races, capturing four firsts and a second.

25 YEARS AGO

from the Baker City Herald

January 6, 1997

Workers hope to reopen one lane of Highway 86 between Halfway and Oxbow to local traffic only by Tuesday afternoon.

The highway, which has been blocked by slides and washouts since early New Year's Day, remained officially closed today.

"I let the school bus through this morning, but we had to help it with a cat (tractor)," said Mike Barry, operations coordinator for the Oregon Department of Transportation and project manager for the repair work.

10 YEARS AGO

from the Baker City Herald

January 6, 2012

Sister Kay Marie Duncan smiles at the reason she sought a position with Pathway Hospice.

"I needed a job," she says.

They asked her to be volunteer coordinator and chaplain for both offices in Baker City and Ontario.

"From no job I went to four," she says.

This month she retired after 10 years with Pathway.

"A great 10 years," she says.

It was more than just a job — she's spent countless hours visiting and praying with patients diagnosed with a terminal illness.

ONE YEAR AGO

from the Baker City Herald

January 7, 2021

Volunteers draped in medical garments were prepped and ready to go at noon Wednesday outside Baker High School as residents lined up in their vehicles to get a free COVID-19 test.

The event, which ran from noon to 5 p.m., was the second in Baker City.

During the first free testing clinic, on Dec. 16, 130 people were tested. Two of those were positive for COVID-19. The total of tests given Wednesday wasn't available by press time.

Evelynn Spivey, 68, of Baker City, said her main motivation to get tested was to rule out the possibility that she's carrying the virus.

"The assurance of not being COVID positive, and being safe for myself and my family and extended members," Spivey said.

Baker City resident Celinda Linscott, who works at a health care facility, also said she was looking for reassurance.

"I just want to make sure that I don't have it. I have been around a lot of people and it's just a preventative mostly," Linscott, 41, said.

She said she was impressed with how she was able to get through the entire process with ease.

"It was super easy, quick and not an issue at all," Linscott said.

Though Spivey shares similar sentiment as far as the process, she believes improvements could be made on describing the testing location.

"Several folks were a bit confused on where to go," Spivey said.

Jason Yencopal, Baker County's emergency management director, said another free testing clinic is scheduled for Jan. 20, also from noon to 5 p.m. in the same parking lot at the northwest corner of the BHS campus.

OREGON LOTTERY

MEGABUCKS, JAN. 3

11 - 15 - 16 - 23 - 24 - 34

Next jackpot: \$7.9 million

POWERBALL, JAN. 3

2 - 13 - 32 - 33 - 48 PB 22

Next jackpot: \$610 million

MEGA MILLIONS, JAN. 4

4 - 6 - 16 - 21 - 22 Mega 1

Next jackpot: \$278 million

WIN FOR LIFE, JAN. 3

29 - 50 - 71 - 76

PICK 4, JAN. 4

• 1 p.m.: 5 - 2 - 7 - 6

• 4 p.m.: 8 - 0 - 5 - 4

• 7 p.m.: 7 - 7 - 9 - 1

• 10 p.m.: 4 - 5 - 6 - 2

LUCKY LINES, JAN. 4

4-8-11-15-18-24-26-30

Next jackpot: \$68,000

SENIOR MENUS

FRIDAY: Chicken cordon bleu with hollandaise, mixed vegetables, rolls, applesauce, cheesecake

MONDAY: Chicken fried steak, mashed potatoes with gravy, carrots, rolls, pea-and-onion salad, cookies

TUESDAY: Herb baked chicken with gravy, rice pilaf, rolls, carrot-raisin salad, brownies

WEDNESDAY: Turkey a la king over a biscuit, mixed vegetables, fruit cup, cinnamon rolls

THURSDAY: Chicken broccoli fettuccine, zucchini and tomatoes, garlic bread, three-bean salad, bread pudding

Public luncheon at the Senior Center, 2810 Cedar St., from 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.; \$5 donation (60 and older), \$7.50 for those under 60.

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School

Continued from A1

On Monday, Jan. 3, the Oregon Department of Education and Oregon Health Authority (OHA) suggested schools either cease extracurricular activities or require students to wear masks, as they do during classes (see related story below).

It is a suggestion but not a mandate, with the decision left to local officials.

Witty said he met the morning of Jan. 5 with the Baker County Health Department to discuss the situation.

Baker County reported 17 COVID-19 cases on Tuesday, Jan. 4 — the highest one-day total in three months, since 18 cases were reported on Oct. 6.

The OHA also reported that a 78-year-old Baker County man died Nov. 28 after testing positive on Oct. 28. It was the county's 37th COVID-19-re-

lated death, and the first reported since Dec. 10. The man had underlying conditions.

With the much more contagious, but less virulent, omicron variant likely the dominant strain of the virus across Oregon, case numbers are rising rapidly.

Baker County reported 37 cases during the first four days of January, after reporting 106 for the whole of December.

The number of Oregonians hospitalized due to COVID-19 remains less than half of the record set during the delta variant surge in September.

Witty said the school district's goal hasn't changed.

"Our primary goal remains to keep kids in school as much as possible and to have as many extracurricular events as we can," he said.

Witty acknowledged, however, that achieving that goal could be difficult, and for a variety of reasons.

"We're going to be chal-

lenged," he said.

In classrooms, the number of teachers and other staff who are missing work has increased this week, in some cases due to COVID-19 infection or exposure, and in other cases due to other illnesses.

As many as nine employees at South Baker Intermediate School, which houses grades four through six, have been out this week, from a staff of about 45.

At Baker High School, nine workers, out of a staff of about 62, were out on Tuesday, Jan. 4.

"So far we've been able to get by, but that might not always be possible," Witty said.

He encourages staff and students to continue to follow the familiar precautions, including wearing masks, washing their hands frequently and maintaining distance when possible.

But the most vital thing, Witty emphasized, is that people who feel ill need to stay home.

He said he understands that

people often feel compelled to go to work, or school or sports practice, even when they don't feel well.

But with the virus remaining prevalent, that dogged attitude could backfire if an employee or student ends up spreading the virus.

"That could be the very thing that shuts us down," Witty said. "We need everybody's help."

He also pointed out that in terms of sports, Baker's schedules depend not only on what happens here, but also the situation in other counties and school districts.

If other schools have COVID issues, they might need to cancel or postpone games, Witty said.

The OHA also reported that a 78-year-old Baker County man died Nov. 28 after testing positive on Oct. 28. It was the county's 37th COVID-19-related death, and the first reported since Dec. 10. The man had underlying conditions.

Schools asked to halt extracurricular activities as COVID cases surge

BY COURTNEY VAUGHN

Oregon Capital Bureau

As Oregon's education and health agencies warn that the omicron variant of COVID-19 may have crippling impacts on schools, the agencies recommended the pause of extracurricular activities.

In a school health advisory Monday, Jan. 3, the Oregon Department of Education and Oregon Health Authority called the need for layered mitigation strategies like vaccinations, boosters, frequent hand washing, masks and distancing at schools "more critical now than at any other time during this pandemic."

The state agencies are asking schools to either pause extracurricular activities or keep the same rules in place that are followed during the school day, like wearing masks.

The use of diagnostic testing and vaccinations is also recommended, if sports or other group activities continue.

"If schools and other organizations proceed with extracurricular activities, especially as these activities move indoors and individuals are unmasked, they should expect rapid transmission of COVID-19 that will prevent students from participating in in-person learning due to isolation for those that contract COVID-19 and lengthy quarantines for those that come into close contact with infected individuals," the



Lisa Britton/Baker City Herald

Baker's Sydnee Pierce dribbles against a Fruitland player on Dec. 15, 2021, in the Baker gym.

health advisory message warns. "This risk should be clearly communicated to families participating in these extracurricular activities."

The recommendation comes as school sports, music and theater performances have fully resumed, with in-person spectators at live events.

In the same advisory, the state agencies simultaneously advocated for a "shorter

seven-day quarantine period after exposure to the coronavirus, to keep students and educators in the classroom as much as possible.

This is different from the recently updated Centers for Disease Control and Prevention guidelines for shorter quarantine periods. The state agencies said they are consulting with the CDC to find out what the new guidance means for schools.

Under current directives, if a student or staff member shows symptoms of COVID-19 or is a close contact of someone infected, they must stay home. A new test-to-stay protocol slated to take effect this month would allow them to return to school on the eighth day of quarantine, as long as they test negative five to seven days after exposure.

"As Oregon fully experiences the impacts of the omicron variant over the next several weeks, student access to in-person instruction is under serious threat," the health advisory states. "While early data indicate that the Omicron variant may result in less severe disease than previous variants, it is increasingly clear that the omicron variant spreads much more quickly and easily than all previous variants."

The OHA and ODE are urging school districts to partner with healthcare providers to offer vaccine clinics and encourage eligible students to get their shots.

Snowbound cattle rescued in Wallowa County

BY BILL BRADSHAW

Wallowa County Chieftain

IMNAHA — An investigation is ongoing into possibly neglected cattle — many of which had young calves — in deep snows on U.S. Forest Service land in the Upper Imnaha area, Wallowa County Sheriff Joel Fish confirmed Friday, Dec. 31.

Fish stated in an email the investigation was started after learning the magnitude of the situation Dec. 19.

"Wallowa County is moving toward seizing the Dean Oregon Ranch cattle for neglect, and we are investigating possible criminal charges," Fish said in the email.

Fish said the sheriff's office is "assisting with the retrieval of the cattle on the Forest Service grazing permits on the Marr Flat C&H Allotment. We have had deputies on snowmobiles assisting since that date."

There have been numerous volunteers helping in the rescue efforts, as confirmed by county Commission Chairman Todd Nash and volunteers with the Wallowa County Humane Society.

Social media alert

One of the first widespread alerts came in a Facebook post by Craig Stockdale, who was one of the first to discover the cattle on the 200 Road south of Salt Creek.

"I just came upon them snowmobiling," Stockdale said Jan. 1.

He said the post mobilized rescuers — both those out finding the cattle and those with facilities to care for the rescued livestock — and he has since taken it down.

Kathy Giesler Reynolds, a volunteer with the Humane Society, shared a post of the cattle Dec. 29. Photos posted on Facebook showed a cow up to its neck in snow and unable to move.

"I was alerted to it yesterday by the ranchers who have been

out there trying to save them," Reynolds said Dec. 30.

She listed several people who were involved in rescuing and caring for the cattle and their calves, calling some of them "heroes."

"Some were too weak to even move," she said of the cattle, adding that although rescuers were able to retrieve calves, a number of the adult cows had to be euthanized.

Stockdale and Anna Butterfield, who with her husband, Mark, ranches northeast of Joseph, confirmed the cattle

are on the Bob Dean Oregon Ranch managed by B.J. Warnock.

Dean lives in the Deep South and Warnock was not at liberty to provide contact information.

The ranch

Warnock issued a statement on the situation by email Jan. 2.

"I am not aware of any plans or attempts to seize any assets," he said.

He also described the situation.

"Dean Oregon Ranches cows were all purchased in

Oregon and Washington and began arriving on Dean Oregon Ranches property October of 2020 and continued arriving through July of 2021. The cows were a mixture of spring and fall calvers," Warnock said.

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