



# Baker City Herald

IN THIS EDITION: LOCAL • BUSINESS & AG LIFE • SPORTS

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**QUICK HITS**

**Good Day Wish To A Subscriber**

A special good day to Herald subscriber Ricky Cobb of Baker City.

**BRIEFING**

**Concert in Pendleton limited to family members**

Due to rising COVID cases, the Oregon East Symphony's youth orchestra concert on Jan. 27 in Pendleton will limit attendance to family members. This change came after the printing of Go! Magazine, which is included with today's issue.

**Red Cross blood drive set for Jan. 24**

The American Red Cross has scheduled a blood drive on Monday, Jan. 24 from noon to 6 p.m. at the Nazarene Church, 1250 Hughes Lane. Although the drive is currently fully booked, there are usually cancellations prior to the drive. Call Myrna Evans at 541-523-5368 to be put on a waiting list, or check on redcrossblood.org to see if appointments open up.

**Chili feed, singalong Jan. 23 at Wolf Creek Grange**

NORTH POWDER — The Wolf Creek Grange in North Powder will have a chili feed and singalong on Sunday, Jan. 23 starting at 1 p.m. Cost for the chili feed is \$5 per person, and \$10 for a family.

People are encouraged to bring their own instrument for the singalong. There will be kazoo and pennywhistles.

**WEATHER**

**Today**  
37/26  
Rain



**Wednesday**  
38/20  
Partly sunny



**Full forecast on the back of the B section.**

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

## Baker schools endure COVID surge

**Student absentee rates higher than usual, but staffing sufficient to continue in-person classes**

BY JAYSON JACOBY  
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The number of empty seats in Baker classrooms remains above average, but otherwise

the school year continues as usual.

And Mark Witty would much rather see those scattered empty seats than he

would silent classrooms where teachers need a computer and a camera to give their lessons to students sitting in their bedrooms.

Although the surge in COVID-19 cases continues to pose a challenge,



Witty

the Baker School District is maintaining in-person classes, said Witty, the district's superintendent.

"Staffing is still the biggest challenge we've got," Witty said on Tuesday after-

noon, Jan. 18, the first day of the third week of classes since students returned from Christmas break and confronted the rapidly spreading omicron variant that has set weekly and daily records for case totals this month.

See, *Surge*/Page A3



Lisa Britton/Baker City Herald

Vera Grove, director of the Rachel Pregnancy Center, organizes clothing in the girls room on Jan. 18, 2022. The center provides help for those experiencing an unexpected pregnancy and offers counseling, parenting classes, baby clothes, diapers, and more.

## Two more COVID-19 deaths reported

BAKER CITY HERALD

Two Baker County residents died last week after testing positive for COVID-19, the Oregon Health Authority (OHA) reported on Tuesday, Jan. 18.

A 79-year-old woman who tested positive on Jan. 9 died Jan. 13 at Saint Alphonsus Medical Center in Boise. OHA hasn't confirmed whether she had underlying conditions.

A 67-year-old man who tested positive on Dec. 30, 2021, died Jan. 14, also at the Boise hospital. OHA hasn't confirmed whether he had underlying conditions.

See, *COVID*/Page A3

## North Powder schools move to distance learning for two days

BY DICK MASON

The (La Grande) Observer

NORTH POWDER — An outbreak of COVID-19 in the North Powder School District has forced the school to shut down in-person instruction and provide only on-line instruction.

The changes were for Wednesday, Jan. 19, and Thursday, Jan. 20. The district has a four-day school week.

"This is what is best for the health and safety of everyone," said Superintendent Lance Dixon.

See, *Powder*/Page A3

## Wolves kill herding dog in Keating Valley

BY JAYSON JACOBY

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Wolves from the Keating pack killed a working dog on a cattle ranch in Keating Valley on Friday, Jan. 14, the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) confirmed after an investigation two days later.

Brian Ratliff, district wildlife biologist at ODFW's Baker City office, said wolves were attracted to the site by six unburied cow carcasses on the property on Middle Bridge Loop Road north of Highway 86.

He strongly urges ranchers to bury carcasses. Even carcasses that are heavily decomposed can lure wolves, as they will eat almost anything, Ratliff said.

"That's the number one thing you can do to keep wolves away," he said.

See, *Wolves*/Page A3

# Help & Healing

## Rachel Pregnancy Center director expecting an increase in demand

BY LISA BRITTON

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Vera Grove expected to see an increase in people seeking help at the Rachel Pregnancy Center as the pandemic continued to affect everyday life.

It didn't happen. "It has affected our traffic — it's way down," she said.

Grove is the director of the Rachel Center in Baker City, which offers support for those experiencing an unplanned pregnancy and help for families in need.

The center's mission is "to offer hope, help and healing

through the love of Christ to hurting women and men in difficult situations."

Grove attributes the decrease in clients to expanded government benefits over the last year or so.

Those are ending, though, and she expects to see more visitors to the center in the coming months.

"We think we'll see an increase in people with needs," she said.

The Center, at 2192 Court St., is open Tuesday through Thursday, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. It is closed from noon to 1 p.m. for lunch.

Resources for pregnancy help including tests, a referral for a free ultrasound pregnancy options, adoption referrals and maternity clothes.

For parents, the center provides "encouragement and counseling," baby clothes up to size 3, baby furniture, diapers and formula, and referrals for other assistance.

Classes are offered too, on topics including prenatal, infant care, relationships, money management and more.

Grove said a program called "Earn While You Learn" allows participants to earn Baby Bucks, which can be redeemed in a spe-

cial area of the center.

Those who are unable to attend in person can still access the center's offerings with educational lessons by email and Zoom meetings.

The Rachel Center is a nonprofit organization, and depends on local donations and grants.

"Everything is donated," Grove said.

In addition to donated items, she said monetary donations help buy diapers, formula, and other items.

This weekend, the center is observing "Sanctity of Human Life Sunday" on Jan. 23. Grove said bulletin inserts are provided to local

See, *Rachel*/Page A3

## Police believe Idaho angler drowned in the Snake River

### Alberto Sillonis, 85, failed to return to his Weiser home on Monday, Jan. 17

BAKER CITY HERALD

Police believe an 85-year-old Idaho fisherman drowned in the Snake River on Monday, Jan. 17, after falling from a dock just below Hells Canyon Dam.

The Baker County Sheriff's Office received a report about 6 p.m. that day that Alberto Sillonis of Weiser was overdue in returning home from a fishing trip to Hells Canyon.

He had left his home that morning and planned to return home in the evening.

Baker County deputies, along with deputies from the Washington County Sheriff's Office in Idaho, began searching the route to Hells Canyon as well as checking hotels in nearby towns, according to a press release from the Baker County Sheriff's Office.

At about 9:07 p.m., deputies found Sillonis' 2008 Nissan Frontier pickup truck in the parking lot at the Hells Canyon Visitors Center.



Sillonis

Deputies searched the immediate vicinity and found two fishing poles, with the line from one still in the water, on the center dock below the visitors center.

Sheriff Travis Ash and the Baker County Search and Rescue team deployed at about 6 a.m. on Tuesday, Jan. 18, to search for Sillonis.

Searchers covered the area near the docks and along the river's shore.

Idaho Power Company employees used a remote-operated vehicle with an underwater camera and

sonar to search the river.

Searchers found a felt, short-brimmed hat on rocks about 60 feet from the docks, and Sillonis' family confirmed that it belonged to him. No other signs of Sillonis were found.

Sillonis is a white man who stands 5-foot-8 and weighs about 160 pounds. He has white hair.

If anyone has information about Sillonis, they can call Ash at 541-523-6415.

The Baker County Sheriff's Office thanked the Baker County Search and Rescue volunteers as well as Idaho Power and their employees for their assistance during the search.



**TODAY**  
Issue 106  
28 pages

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