



OUTDOORS B1
Free fishing in Oregon from February 19-20



SPORTS A5
Bulldogs narrowly defeat Vikings, 68-65

Baker City Herald

IN THIS EDITION: LOCAL • OUTDOORS & REC • SPORTS

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QUICK HITS

Good Day Wish To A Subscriber

A special good day to Herald subscriber Phoebe Wachtel of Baker City.

BRIEFING

Logan Brashler on dean's list at George Fox

NEWBERG — Logan Brashler of Baker City was among the students who earned dean's list recognition at George Fox University for the fall 2021 semester. Traditional undergraduate students must earn a 3.5 grade point average or above on 12 or more hours of graded work to earn a spot on the dean's list. Brashler is a junior majoring in kinesiology.

Health Department to give free COVID-19 home test kits

The Baker County Health Department will distribute free COVID-19 home testing kits at three locations. The limit is one box per car, and each box contains two tests.

- Huntington, Lee Stevenson Memorial Park, Tuesday, Feb. 15, 3 p.m. to 4 p.m.
- Richland, Eagle Valley Grange Community Park, Thursday, Feb. 17, 2 p.m. to 3 p.m.
- Sumpter, Volunteer Park, Friday, Feb. 18, 10 a.m. to 11 a.m.

WEATHER

Today
42/14
Mostly sunny

Sunday
39/22
Mostly sunny

Monday
38/24
Light snow

Full forecast on the back of the B section.

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

Challenges continue for restaurants

Food prices, staffing issues are factors but owners ready for normality as cases drop

BY LISA BRITTON

lbritton@bakercityherald.com

State restrictions on capacity in restaurants related to the pandemic lifted in June 2021, but business is not back to normal.

Although the record-setting wave of new cases statewide and in Baker County has peaked, with case rates dropping over the past two weeks, the high numbers recently left some eateries with few employees available.

"We've had a skeleton crew," Tyler Brown, who owns Barley Brown's restaurant and taphouse, said recently.

The issue is that if one person tests positive, many more are considered a close contact and have to quarantine for five days.

In late January, Brown closed his restaurant for several days, but was able to keep the taphouse open with a limited menu.

"One cook can't run the restaurant, but can run the tap room," he said.

Traditionally only open for dinner, Barley's moved hours to include lunch and continues with the schedule of 11 a.m. to 8 p.m., which allows for several shifts.

"We were trying to be proactive and spread out the employees," Brown said.

Hours will return to the original schedule — some day.

"We want to get back to normal," Brown said.

Staffing isn't the only issue these days — supplies have been limited and costs continue to increase.

"Coconut milk for our lattes was lost somewhere overseas for about three months, but that's finally available," said Jenny Mowe, owner of Sweet Wife Baking,



Lisa Britton/Baker City Herald

Jamie Kassien, co-owner of D&J Taco Shop in Baker City prepares an order on Feb. 3, 2022.

"Overall every single thing we buy, from plasticwear to to-go boxes, are all doubled or tripled in price."

— Jamie Kassien, co-owner, D&J Taco Shop, Baker City

which is celebrating 11 years in business this year.

As for the staff, when an employee tests positive, she said that person is usually out for two to three weeks.

"We haven't had any spread from one employee to the next because we mask our staff in the back and remind them to wear their masks properly," she said.

The bakery sees 100 to 200 customers a day — and that number doubles in the summer, Mowe said. Another piece of the puzzle

is sick pay, which is required for businesses with 10 or more employees.

"If you have three to four employees use their sick pay all at the same time, like you would during an outbreak, plus you have to close because you have no staff to run your business — that's the double whammy of paying out and not being able to collect any sort of income to help with costs," Mowe said.

See, Restaurants/Page A6

COVID cases continue to drop

Baker City Herald

The number of COVID-19 cases in Baker County continues to drop for the third straight week.

After reaching a weekly record of 183 cases from Jan. 16-22, the county's weekly totals dropped to 165 and 115, a decline of 37%.

Through the first five days of the current weekly measuring period — Feb. 6-12 — the county reported 54 cases. If that rate continues for the last two days of the week, the county's weekly total would drop by an additional 32% from the previous week, and by 57% from the record.

The county's rate of positive tests has also declined, from 33.2% of tests from Jan. 16-22, to 19% for the current week (through Feb. 10).

The Oregon Health Authority (OHA) on Thursday, Feb. 10, reported the COVID-19-related death of a Baker County resident.

Details, including the person's age and gender, were not available by press time on Friday, Feb. 11.

It was the county's second COVID-19-related death during February. There were four such deaths in January.

The county's total during the pandemic is 44 COVID-19-related deaths.

State health officials said on Thursday, Feb. 10, that Oregon has passed the crest of the omicron wave, but they cautioned that the state still faces a dangerous time before levels drop back to where they were in June 2021.

"The number of people hospitalized with COVID-19 has peaked and will steadily recede until reaching pre-omicron levels by the end of March," according to the Feb. 10 forecast by Oregon Health & Science University.

But the fifth and most widely-spread of the waves of virus that have hit Oregon in the past two years is not over.

"It's important for people to stick with masking through the next several weeks," said Peter Graven, director of the OHSU Office of Advanced Analytics.

See, COVID/Page A3

Council OKs deal for major curb ramp work

BY SAMANTHA O'CONNOR

soconnor@bakercityherald.com

The Baker City Council on Tuesday, Feb. 8, voted 5-0 to approve an agreement with the Oregon Department of Transportation for a major project planned this spring and summer to upgrade more than 300 curb ramps to be accessible to people in wheelchairs.

Councilors Dean Guyer and Heather Sells were absent.

Public Works Director Michelle Owen said ODOT plans to build the curbs, which will comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act, from April through October.

"This is over 300 curb ramps that will be impacted on Campbell, Main, Broadway, Dewey, Elm, so a significant project," Owen told councilors. "There will be ODOT websites set up to help communicate with folks just in general about the project. We'll link that to our website as well."

Those sections of streets, though inside the city limits, are also part of state highways, which is why ODOT is responsible for the project.

According to a staff report, the improvements will consist of ADA-compliant curb ramp rehabilitation, replacement or construction, relocation, removal, or replacement of sidewalk sections, and adjustments to driveways as needed to meet ADA standards. ODOT will also build a section of sidewalk on the north side of Campbell Street near Interstate 84.

"This is just our agreement with ODOT that they're going to come to town and fix what they're required to fix," Owen said.

She said it is a multi million dollar investment in the community. ODOT will put the project out for bids later this winter.

Councilor Shane Alderson asked about how the work will affect pedestrians crossing Main Street.

"There will be a lot of sidewalk closed signs and then a reroute the block before," Owen said.

She said ODOT has done this type of work in several cities, and the agency tries to stagger the work so pedestrian access is affected on only

one block on a particular street at any time.

Councilor Jason Spriet asked how ODOT will mitigate for community events, such as Miners Jubilee and the Baker County Fair, during the summer.

"They'll be working, potentially," Owen said. "When the fair is going on, they won't likely be working on Campbell Street at Clark. When we have a parade, it's a Saturday so they won't be working on Main Street."

She said there is no way to say there won't be impacts during Miners Jubilee, as crews will be working on Main Street and Campbell Street.

In other business on Tuesday, Feb. 8, councilors:

- scheduled a work session an hour before the March 8 regular meeting to review language in the city charter.
- unanimously approved a contract with Angelo Planning Group for work on the City's Housing Production Strategy for an amount not to exceed \$49,000.

See, Council/Page A3

Police arrest 2 on drug charges

Third man also suspected as being part of trafficking ring

BY JAYSON JACOBY

jjacoby@bakercityherald.com

The Baker County Narcotics Enforcement Team recently arrested two men on drug charges, both of whom were arrested on similar charges in 2021.

See, Drugs/Page A3



TODAY
Issue 116
12 pages

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Comics.....B5	Dear Abby.....B6	News of Record.....A2	Senior Menus.....A2	Turning Backs.....A2
Community News.....A2	Horoscope.....B2 & B3	Outdoors.....B1 & B2	Sports.....A5	Weather.....B6