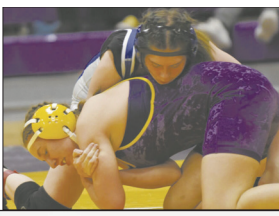




**OUTDOORS B1**  
Fishing and meeting the police in Sonora, Mexico



**SPORTS A5**  
Two Baker girls wrestle at state



**STATE A6**  
Convictions could be vacated by proposed law

# Baker City Herald

IN THIS EDITION: LOCAL • OUTDOORS & REC • SPORTS Serving Baker County since 1870 • bakercityherald.com SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 26, 2022 • \$1.50

**QUICK HITS**

**Good Day Wish To A Subscriber**

A special good day to Herald subscriber Michael Shoemaker of Baker City.

**BRIEFING**

**Baker County Garden Club meets March 2**

The Baker County Garden Club will meet Wednesday, March 2, at 10 a.m. at the Senior Center, 2810 Cedar St. in Baker City. Janice Cowan will present a class on container gardening. Lunch will be available, \$5 for seniors or \$7.50 for those under 60, or bring your own lunch. New members are always welcome.

**Megan Hufford graduates from University of Idaho**

Megan M. Hufford of North Powder recently graduated from the University of Idaho with a degree in animal and veterinary science.

**Joyce Badgley Hunsaker to speak at Baker Heritage Museum**

Joyce Badgley Hunsaker will give a talk titled "From Bloomers to Briefcases: Women's Legacies in Creating Community" for this month's lecture series at the Baker Heritage Museum, in partnership with the American Association of University Women (AAUW).

The event is at 6 p.m. Tuesday, March 8, at the museum, 2480 Grove St. Admission is free.

**WEATHER**

**Today**  
30/16  
Snow late

**Sunday**  
32/19  
Rain or snow

**Monday**  
36/27  
Afternoon rain

Full forecast on the back of the B section.

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

## Focus on Families

Potential foster families can learn about the needs during virtual event March 16



Contributed Photo

Kala and Terry Linville have been foster parents, and adopted their daughter Evey in 2021. Foster families will share their experiences during a virtual event on March 16, 2022. Anyone interested in learning more about foster care is encouraged to join.

BY LISA BRITTON

lbritton@bakercityherald.com  
Foster families are needed in Northeastern Oregon, and an event is scheduled in March for those who would like to learn more about foster care.

And it will be virtual, so people can join from anywhere.

The session will be Wednesday, March 16, from 6 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.

To register, go to <https://everychildneoregon.org/>. Click on "Upcoming Events" and search by county to find the event.

The official title is "Virtual Explore Fostering — Every Child NE Oregon."

During the discussion, a panel of experienced families will share their stories about providing foster care.

"To share their experiences, and why they got started," said Tammie Blessing, resource family retention and recruitment champion for Districts 13 and 14, which includes Baker, Union, Wallowa, Grant, Harney and Malheur counties. "Having families talk about it is our best recruitment tool."

This "Learn About Foster Care" event is sponsored by Every Child, Oregon Department of Human Services, and GOBHI (Greater Oregon Behavioral Health Inc.).

Those three organizations, Blessing said, represent different parts of the foster system.

GOBHI focuses on "treatment foster care," while Every Child provides volunteer opportunities to support children in the foster system and families that provide care.

"We're trying to offer the whole spectrum of what's available to people interested in fostering," Blessing said.

She hopes to spur interest from Eastern Oregon counties, where foster families are urgently needed.

"Statewide there's a need, but we continue in those six eastern counties to need homes," she said.

The need is especially great for older children, children who identify as LGBTQIA+ and families for sibling groups.

**The numbers**

Blessing said District 13 (Baker, Union and Wallowa counties) had a total of 54 children in foster care and 36 resource homes at the end of January.

As of Jan. 1, 2022, there were 5,393 children in foster care in Oregon — the fewest in 16 years, according to the Oregon Child Welfare Division.

The reason for the low number, Blessing said, is "family first" legislation, which has the focus on keeping children with families and providing support.

If foster care is necessary, Blessing said the first step is to look for

relatives or close friends who can foster the child.

"We're trying to maintain relational connections with kids — trying to keep kids connected to people they already know," she said.

In the case that a relative can't be found, the child is cared for by a general applicant foster family — but Blessing said work continues to find a relative.

The current recruitment efforts across the state are for general applicant families.

"So we have enough families, and they're diverse enough, that we can match children to a family," she said.

**Every Child**

Those who aren't ready to provide full-time care can learn more about foster care by volunteering with Every Child NE Oregon, which works to expand the support system around foster care.

"There are ways to support fostering without taking a child into your home," Blessing said. "It's a way to dip your toe in and learn what it's about."

She said that a general applicant family, on average, thinks about becoming a foster family for two to three years.

To learn more about Every Child, visit [everychildneoregon.org/](http://everychildneoregon.org/) or follow the page on Facebook.

## Masks likely optional in Baker District schools after spring break

BY JAYSON JACOBY  
jjacoby@bakercityherald.com

Baker School District students likely will be able to leave one familiar item at home when they return to classes on Monday, March 28, the first day after spring break.

Face masks.

State officials announced on Thursday, Feb. 24, that the statewide mask requirement for indoor public spaces, including schools, will end March 19.

That's a change from the initial announcement earlier this month.

Officials said then that the mask mandate for schools would continue through March 31, but that it could end sooner for other indoor public spaces depending on the number of COVID-19 patients in hospitals statewide.

"We are able to take this important step, earlier than anticipated, because of the collective diligence and the shared sacrifice that people in Oregon have demonstrated in getting vaccinated, wearing masks and limiting their gatherings," Dean Sidelinger, health officer and state epidemiologist, said in a press release.

Hospitalizations due to COVID-19 have dropped by 47% since peaking in late January, according to the Oregon Health Authority. New infections have plummeted by more than 80% over the past month.



Witty

See, Masks/Page A2

## Renovation of Interpretive Center starts on March 2

BY JAYSON JACOBY  
jjacoby@bakercityherald.com

The biggest project at the Oregon Trail Interpretive Center near Baker City since it opened almost 30 years ago will begin March 2.

The \$6.5 million makeover is designed to turn the Center, which has attracted almost 2.4 million visitors, from an energy hog to a building with a more modest appetite for electricity.

Achieving that will entail much more than cosmetic work.

The Bureau of Land Management, the federal agency that operates the Center on Flagstaff Hill about 5 miles east of Baker City, has hired Hess Contracting of Preston, Idaho, to replace most items attached to its frame.

That includes installing new cement board siding, insulation, roofing, windows and doors.

The contractor will also replace the heating and cooling system for the all-electric building.

See, Center/Page A3

## Resident finds skinned coyote beside street

BY JAYSON JACOBY

jjacoby@bakercityherald.com

Brian Blomster wondered what caused the neighbor's dog to jump into the bushes beside the street and later attracted his cat's attention.

Then he saw what it was. And wished he hadn't.

The carcass of a skinned coyote was discarded atop some shrubs beside Hillcrest Drive just across the street from the home, at 305 Hillcrest, where Blomster has lived for 4 years.

He found the carcass Monday morning, Feb. 21.

"I was freaked out because it looked like a dog," Blomster said.

He called the Baker County Dispatch Center.

Officer Rand Weaver of the Baker City Police Department arrived around 9:30 a.m. He said he took the carcass to the Animal Clinic of Baker, where a veterinarian identified the carcass as a coyote, not a domestic dog.

Blomster said he's convinced

that whoever dumped the carcass did so the previous night.

If it had been there on Sunday, Feb. 20, he's certain he or someone else would have seen it.

Blomster said that although he's glad the carcass wasn't a domestic dog, he still is bothered that someone would toss a dead animal beside a residential street rather than outside town.

"It just feels offensive," he said in a phone interview on Friday, Feb. 25. "Why would you do that?"

Blomster and Weaver both said that inside the carcass was a surgical rubber glove and a length of red cord.

Weaver figures the person who skinned the coyote wore gloves while doing so, and used the cord to suspend the carcass while skinning it.

Weaver said if police could identify the person who discarded the carcass, the person could be cited for offensive littering.

But he conceded that's extremely unlikely to happen,

absent an eyewitness or security camera evidence that identifies at least a vehicle.

Weaver said the state crime lab isn't going to try to extract human DNA from the carcass for what is a misdemeanor offense.

Blomster said he understands that it's improbable anyone will be punished.

But he's still upset about the incident.

"It was extremely creepy," he said. "Why didn't they just leave it out in the wild?"



**TODAY**  
Issue 121  
12 pages

Classified.....B2-B4	Crossword.....B2 & B4	Jayson Jacoby.....A4	Opinion.....A4	Sports.....A6
Comics.....B5	Dear Abby.....B6	Lottery Results.....A2	Outdoors.....B1 & B2	Turning Backs.....A2
Community News.....A2	Horoscope.....B2 & B4	News of Record.....A2	Senior Menus.....A2	Weather.....B6