



LOCAL A2
La Grande man hurt
in fall from rocks



SPORTS A5
Baker track teams
win district titles



SPORTS A6
Baker baseball drops
pair at La Grande

Baker City Herald

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QUICK HITS

Good Day Wish To A Subscriber

A special good day to Herald subscriber Sigrid Johnson of Baker City.

BRIEFING

Groups urge residents to attend school board meeting

Baker County United is planning its monthly freedom rally at the Baker 5J School District office, 2090 Fourth St., on Thursday, May 19, at 5 p.m. The group is urging people to attend the school board meeting, which starts at 6 p.m. to ask questions about the district's spending priorities, including the board's recent decision to buy two homes to house foreign students attending Baker High School through the district's Oregon International School program.

A local parent, Heather Dallstream, is also urging residents to attend the board meeting and learn about district priorities.

Baker County Garden Club meets May 18

The Baker County Garden Club will meet on Wednesday, May 18, at 10:30 a.m. at the Eagle Cap Nursery, 45328 Mother Lode Road in the Keating Valley. Those who want to carpool should meet at 9:30 a.m. at the Baker County Library, 2400 Resort St. Please bring a sack lunch. New members are always welcome.

WEATHER

Today
67/39
Mostly sunny



Wednesday
63/37
Rain showers



Full forecast on the back of the B section.

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



Lisa Britton/Baker City Herald
Melody Brooks has closed her day care after 51 years of caring for children — 47 of those years in Baker City. Here, during their last week at Melody's Playce in May 2022, she is surrounded by, from left, Karson Swanlund, Hank McAdams, Conn McDowell, Dax Layton, Hattie Crowell and Amzie Lutz.

Miss Melody is retiring

Melody Brooks has operated a day care for 51 years, 47 of those in Baker City

BY LISA BRITTON
lbritton@bakercityherald.com

The youngsters line up around the black rug covered with white polka dots, toys clutched in small hands, ready for Melody Brooks to say "go!"

When she does, the kids toss their toy in the hopes it lands squarely on a white dot.

None does. Each child scrambles to get their toy, then lines up again for another chance.

This game, called "Peg on a Polka Dot," is well-known to all the kids who have come to Melody's Playce.

But after this week, there won't be tossing of pegs.

These kids won't shriek with glee as they take a turn down the slide.

The table will be empty, no preschoolers coloring a bear brown or practicing their address.

No 3-year-old Hattie Crowell looking across the room and saying "Miss Melody, you beautiful!"

After 51 years in the day care business, Brooks is retiring.

"I'm going to miss it," she said Tuesday, May 10. "Every generation of kids — I love them. That doesn't go away."

Brooks started her day care in 1971 when she lived in Sacramento near a military base.

"Everyone needed day care so badly," she said.

She continued her business in Salem after moving there in 1974.

In 1975, she moved to Baker City, into a house on Third Street.

There was a day care next door, and one across the street.

"They knew people who needed it," she said.

She's had several homes over the years — from Third Street to Valley Avenue, then to Colorado Street.

She's been in her place at the north end of Cedar Street near Hughes Lane for 30 years — a home she remodeled into the perfect place for a day care with the help of her husband, Clyde.

Brooks said 270 children have been in her care over the last 51 years.

"I can name every day care kid," she said. "They're like your own kids. They stay so many years, then I get their siblings."

Or, in some cases, twins.

"Melody cared for Afton and Ryker for 10 years," said April Albert. "In those 10 years she nurtured and taught them with loving discipline. Through her consistency she had them kindergarten ready."

Not just day care

Twenty years ago Brooks added preschool into her offerings for ages 2-3 and 4-5.

If she had a baby in her care, he or she sat on Brooks' lap while she taught.

"Those little ones learn so fast," she said.

As a certified day care, she has

cared for children from babies up to age 12. The school age kids mostly came after school.

"The big kids help take care of the little ones," she said. "They learn to nurture."

Albert said her twins looked forward to being the "big" kids.

"She created a family unit where the kids helped each other and looked forward to being the big kid when it was their time," Albert said. "I will forever be grateful for the time we had with her and Clyde."

As her day care kids aged toward kindergarten, Brooks would break out tiny purple caps and gowns for a graduation.

On May 12, all of her current kids "graduated" for the last such ceremony at Melody's Playce.

"Melody has loved my kids from the moment they walk in the door — or, in Hattie's case, the moment she was born," said Courtney Crowell, mom of Hattie and Hazel. "She's provided such a wonderful foundation for my children, and she and Clyde have become like family to us."

Wiggly teeth

Her games aren't the only part her day care kids will remember.

"I'm famous for pulling teeth," she said.

She's so good that many kids would let only Miss Melody pull a wiggly tooth.

See, *Melody*/Page A3

Governor declares a local drought emergency

BY JAYSON JACOBY
jjacoby@bakercityherald.com

Oregon Gov. Kate Brown has declared a drought emergency in Baker County, granting a request that Baker County commissioners made on April 28.

Commissioners initially approved a drought disaster resolution on April 6.

On Friday, May 13, Brown issued an executive order declaring a drought emergency in Baker and three other counties — Wallowa, Wheeler and Douglas.

"Baker, Douglas, Wallowa, and Wheeler counties are facing historic challenges from drought conditions that are creating hardships for the people, farms, ranches, communities, and ecosystems of the region," Brown said in a press release. "I am committed to doing everything possible to make state resources available to provide immediate relief and assistance to water users throughout Baker, Douglas, Wallowa, and Wheeler counties."

The drought order gives the Oregon Water Resources Department more flexibility in allocating water, reviewing requests for wells and reducing state fees.

Drought declarations can also make property owners in the county eligible for financial aid and other assistance from the state and federal government.

See, *Drought*/Page A3



Brown



Bennett

Youth hurt when arrow splinters

Baker City Herald

A Baker City boy sustained a minor injury to his arm on Friday evening, May 13, when a splinter broke off the carbon fiber arrow he was shooting in a yard.

According to a press release from Baker City Police, the initial report, from around 5:51 p.m. in the 900 block of Elm Street, was of a juvenile male with an arrow in his arm.

Police, along with paramedics from the Baker City Fire Department, responded and found that the boy had not been shot by an arrow, but rather injured by the splinter from the arrow. He was taken by ambulance to the Saint Alphonsus Medical Center-Baker City.

Police learned that the boy was alone, shooting a "kids-style" compound bow at a cardboard target in a backyard, when the arrow broke.

"The reported injury was determined to be accidental due to mechanical failure and we wish the injured juvenile a speedy recovery from the minor injury suffered," the press release reads.

Baker City Police also pointed out that shooting any type of bow and arrow, including crossbows, is illegal within the city limits.

"Baker City Police have responded to past reports throughout the city over the years where arrows that have been accidentally released or have missed their intended targets with the potential to cause serious or fatal injuries to neighbors around them," according to the press release.

City adds ambulance database to website

BY SAMANTHA O'CONNOR
soconnor@bakercityherald.com

Baker City Manager Jonathan Cannon has added a page to the city's website that includes links to dozens of documents related to the city's ambulance service.

Cannon, in his weekly newsletter released Friday, May 13, wrote that he asked the city recorder to create the page.

From the city's home page — www.bakercity.com — click on the link for "Baker City Ambulance Service Information Page."

The database also has links to recent and historical information about the Baker City Fire Department, Baker County's pending Request for Proposals (RFP) for the Baker Ambulance Service Area, and a variety of city financial records related to ambulance service.

In the newsletter, Cannon wrote that several citizens have asked him about the ambulance situation, and the city has received multiple requests, under Oregon's Public Re-

cords Law, for documents.

The newsletter also includes Cannon's answers to what he said are some common questions he has received recently.

Interest in the subject has increased dramatically since March 22, when the City Council, after reviewing a report from Cannon, voted to notify Baker County that the city intended to discontinue ambulance service Sept. 30, 2022.

The city fire department has for many decades been a dual-role agency, responding to fires and ambulance calls.

Under Oregon law, Baker County, not the city, is responsible for choosing ambulance providers.

The Baker City Fire Department is the current provider for the Baker Ambulance Service Area, which includes the city and about two-thirds of the rest of the county, including Baker and Sumpter valleys.

The county's three other ambulance service areas cover the Eagle

and Pine valleys, and the Huntington area.

In the newsletter, Cannon wrote that even if Baker City ends its ambulance service Sept. 30, the county is obligated to find a new provider.

To that end, county commissioners recently released a request for proposals (RFP) from potential ambulance operators.

The Baker City Council decided May 10 to submit a response to the county's RFP. Councilors discussed that response during a work session May 11.

In the newsletter, Cannon wrote that he will be "working over the next two weeks to prepare a submission" that councilors will review during their May 24 meeting.

He also wrote that even if the city does stop operating ambulances, "the Fire Department is not going away. It will still exist and it will still have adequate staff to respond to fire calls. The department will still be able to perform life-saving rescues in structure fires."

See, *Ambulance*/Page A3



Cannon



TODAY
Issue 3
12 pages

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