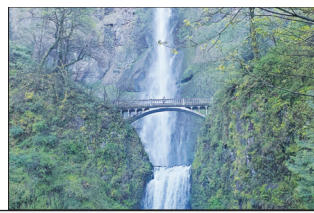




LOCAL A2
Baker High students collect scholarships at awards night



SPORTS A5
Baker baseball, softball seasons end with playoff losses



OUTDOORS B1
Fresh appreciation for an Oregon icon

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 Tom Bunch of Enterprise.

BRIEFING

Volunteers sought to set out flags on Memorial Day

Volunteers will gather at 6 a.m. on Memorial Day, Monday, May 30, at Mount Hope Cemetery to place about 550 American flags, each featuring the name of a military veteran. A Memorial Day ceremony will start at 11 a.m. that day in the veterans section at the south end of the cemetery, and volunteers are needed to help remove the flags after the ceremony.

Open house set June 2 for curb ramp project

Residents can learn about a major project starting soon to replace or install new wheelchair-accessible curb ramps in Baker City during an open house June 2 from 4 p.m. to 7 p.m. at Baker City Hall, 1655 First St.

Employees from the Oregon Department of Transportation's project team, including staff from the construction contractor and designers, will answer questions.

ODOT will be upgrading more than 300 ramps along sections of several streets, including Campbell, Main, Broadway, Dewey and Elm. The work is slated to continue through October.

WEATHER

Today
60/42
Rain showers

Sunday
47/38
Rain showers

Monday
53/37
Morning showers

Full forecast on the back of the B section.

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

Threat prompts lockdown at Baker schools

Baker City Police determined threat was not credible

BY JAYSON JACOBY AND SAMANTHA O'CONNOR
Baker City Herald

Baker High School freshman Sofie Kaaen was having a normal lunch at a nearby restaurant, until a classmate got a phone call from a parent with the news that someone had made a threat about a shooting at the school.

Nobody was thinking much about their meal at Paizano's Pizza, just a couple blocks west of the BHS

campus, after that call just after noon on Thursday, May 26.

"Everybody started calling their parents and leaving," Kaaen said. "It was really chaotic."

She didn't think then about the shooting two days earlier at Robb Elementary School in Uvalde, Texas, in which 19 students and two teachers died, and 17 other people were wounded.

But Kaaen thought a lot of about that tragedy later, after the initial shock had receded.

"Afterwards I realized

that was a weird coincidence," she said. "I feel like what happened (Thursday) really put the Texas shooting into perspective, and having that fear for the people still at our school made me reflect on how serious school shootings really are."

Although there was no shooter at the high school, the threat prompted Baker City Police to respond and the Baker School District to institute "a lockdown" at all schools in the district as a precaution.



A Baker City Police officer stands outside South Baker Intermediate School early Thursday afternoon, May 26, 2022.

Lisa Britton/Baker City Herald

See, Threat/Page A3



Kelton Broadie, left, Joseph Anders-Lerma and Shayd Simmons inspect a water sample collected from the creek at Camp Elkanah during outdoor school on May 24, 2022. The three are sixth graders at South Baker Intermediate School.

Lisa Britton/Baker City Herald

Delectable dandelions

Unconventional snacking was just one new experience for sixth graders during outdoor school

BY LISA BRITTON
lbritton@bakercityherald.com

CAMP ELKANAH — Jean Ann Mitchell ended the botany lesson with a snack.

But not just any snack — this one was bright yellow, full of petals, and in abundant supply across the meadow.

"Those are each flowers," she said, picking apart the dandelion head as the students leaned in for a look.

Each of those petals is edible — and nearly every sixth grader tried at least a taste of the common flower.

Then the bell rang and the kids made their way to a different type of meal — homemade macaroni and cheese prepared to feed kids after a morning of outdoor school activities.

Sixth graders from South Baker Intermediate School and Haines Elementary arrived at Camp Elkanah, near Ukiah about 70 miles northwest of

Baker City, on May 23 for this year's outdoor school.

They stayed two nights, and returned home Wednesday, May 25.

This year Camp Elkanah staff organized the schedule, programs, volunteers and handouts. In Oregon, outdoor school opportunities have been funded by lottery dollars since the passage of Measure 99 in 2016.

The purpose of that measure was to establish a permanent fund so every Oregon school student had the opportunity for a week of science-based education.

The Oregon State University Extension Service is responsible for distributing the funds.

"Suddenly, everyone needed outdoor school, and there's not enough outdoor school providers," said Kaitlin Gustafson, pro-

gram director at Camp Elkanah.

At first, a school would rent the facility and then organize its own programming.

"What (OSU) heard from school districts is that this is a lot of work," she said.

So now Camp Elkanah provides the experience.

Gustafson and her husband, Josh, live full-time at Camp Elkanah with their family. In addition to outdoor school, they provide summer camps and retreats.

The facility is busy from April to November. This was the fifth week they welcomed a school.

"It's a really cool opportunity to get involved in the community," she said.

Plus, she said it's nice for kids to be in nature.

See, Outdoors/Page A3



Phil Richerson, a hydrogeologist with the DEQ office in Pendleton, taught students about how surface water can be contaminated — and how humans can minimize their mess.

Lisa Britton/Baker City Herald

County hires one private ambulance to back up city

Baker City Herald

Baker County has contracted with a private company, American Medical Response, to have an ambulance temporarily available for calls in Baker City and much of the rest of the county starting Friday, May 27, the beginning of Memorial Day weekend.

The agreement runs through June 6, 2022. The AMR ambulance will be the first called ambulance in the Baker and Huntington ambulance service areas, according to the agreement with the county. The county will pay the company \$3,700 per day.

The county has also been in contact with other ambulance providers and quick response units in Baker, Union, Grant and Malheur counties that can help with Baker County calls if needed, according to a press release from Jason Yencopal, Baker County's emergency management director.

The county declared a local emergency on May 24, a week after the Baker City Fire Department notified the county that due to staffing shortages, the department, which operates two advanced life support ambulances, might not be able to handle two simultaneous calls.

"When we receive fire call and medical call simultaneously, we will have to triage the calls as they come and determine the greatest threat to life and property," Baker City Fire Chief Sean Lee wrote in an email to the county. "My hope is that this will give you an opportunity to find a provider for the interim that will be able to maintain the existing level of service."

Under Oregon law, Baker County is responsible for ensuring ambulance service.

The Baker City Fire Department is the ambulance provider for a service area that includes Baker City and about two-thirds

of the rest of the county.

The county has three other ambulance service areas, covering the Richland, Halfway/Oxbow and Huntington areas.

In his press release, Yencopal wrote that the Eagle Valley and Halfway/Oxbow ambulance services will be available to help if needed.

In addition, "law enforcement officers have offered to drive the ambulance if needed in an effort to free up medical responders so that they can provide care to a patient during an ambulance transport," Yencopal wrote.

The Baker City Fire Department, which is budgeted for 16.25 full-time equivalents, has three vacant firefighter/paramedic positions. One of those has been unfilled for several months. A second employee left in early April, and a third earlier this month.

The issues Lee raised in his email to the county arrived

while it's uncertain whether Baker City will continue to operate ambulances, as it has done for many decades, beyond Sept. 30, 2022.

That's the date the city set for ending its ambulance service in a notice the City Council voted to send to the county on March 22.

City Manager Jonathan Cannon has said the city isn't collecting enough in ambulance bills to continue operating the service.

If the city drops ambulance service, it would need to cut the fire department staffing to 10.5 full-time equivalents.

Brian Johnson, a firefighter/paramedic, cited that possibility, which would likely lead to him being laid off, as the reason he took a job in Washington state.

Casey Johnson, president of the local union chapter that represents city firefighters, blames the current staffing shortage in part on the city's decision in

July 2021 to change the working schedule for the department's three division chiefs. Two of them no longer work the usual 24-hour shifts that firefighter/paramedics work.

Since that change, the department's overtime costs have nearly doubled over the previous year, as the city has needed to call in off-duty firefighters much more often.

Yencopal said American Medical Response, the private company that is supplying an ambulance, also had an ambulance staffed in Baker County during the solar eclipse in August 2017.

"Many partners are coming together to support Baker City during this staffing shortage, and Baker County is grateful to all of our emergency responders for their commitment to being there for our community during medical emergencies," Yencopal said.

TODAY
Issue 8
12 pages

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Community News.....A2	Horoscope.....B3 & B4	News of Record.....A2	Senior Menus.....A2	Weather.....B6

