Ambulance

Continued from A1

The situation involves ground ambulance transports. Air transport coverage through LifeFlight is not affected.

"We're just transitioning that dollar amount of the funds we received so that the new company can carry those contracts through their expiration," City Manager Jonathan Cannon said Tuesday.

Councilors approved the resolution 6-0. Councilor Dean Guyer was absent.

Opposing Measure 114

Councilors voted 5-0 to approve a letter to citizens, signed by Mayor Kerry McQuisten, urging voters to oppose Measure 114, a statewide issue on the Nov. 8 ballot.

Councilor Kenyon Damschen abstained from the vote, saying he did not have enough information on Measure 114.

Measure 114 would impose new requirements for people who want to buy a gun, and prohibit the sale of gun magazines holding more than 10 rounds.

"This measure is a defacto gun sales ban in the state of Oregon," the letter states. "Earlier this year, we resolved as a body to protect your Second Amendment Rights, and we continue to do so. This measure tells us we have to get permission from the government to exercise our constitutional rights, which opposes the very structure our founding fathers built our Republic upon."

Other business

Councilors on Tuesday also:

• Awarded a bid for "cured-in-place-pipe" — a method of extending the life of existing sewer and stormwater pipes — for $150,000 to Planned and Engineered Construction Inc.

• Declared Oct. 10 as World Mental Health Awareness Day. Andi Walsh of New Directions Northwest thanked the council for recognizing the issue of mental health in the community.

Infected

Continued from A1

Although about 80% of people infected with West Nile virus have no symptoms or very minor effects, according to the Oregon Health Authority, the virus can cause major and lasting neurological problems. In rare cases it can be fatal.

The incubation period for the virus is typically three to 14 days.

People infected with the virus can't transmit it to others.

In 2021 there was one human case of West Nile virus in Baker County.

There were no human cases in the county in 2020, two cases in 2019, none from 2015-18, and four cases in 2014.

West Nile virus has been found in mosquitoes trapped this summer in Baker County.

The Baker Valley Vector Control District, the property-tax funded district that controls mosquitoes on a 200,000-acre district including most of Baker, Bowen and Keating valleys, collects mosquitoes from traps and sends them to a lab at Oregon State University in Corvallis for testing.

A total of 21 "pools" of mosquitoes — a pool typically includes 10 to 50 mosquitoes — have tested positive for the virus this year.

Most of those were trapped in the Keating area, but two infected pools were collected about 2 miles south of North Powder, and one pool was trapped about 2 miles south of Baker City.

Richland is outside the vector control district.

Matt Hutchinson, the district's manager, said on Wednesday, Oct. 12 that mosquito numbers have dropped substantially, although populations are above average for mid October due to the persistent warm temperatures.

He said district workers ceased the mosquito trapping program — which is done for purposes of testing, not limiting numbers — a couple weeks ago due to declining populations.

Lisa Britton/Baker City Herald

This wagon jack came across on the Oregon Trail — an important tool for when the pioneers had to fix a wheel.

Renovations

Continued from A1

Where did it all go?

To prepare for construction, artifacts were documented and moved to the maintenance building, located at the base of the hill near the entrance.

A labyrinth of rooms contains items in an orderly fashion — one is dedicated to storing the costumes for interpreters, who often dress in period clothing to present special programs.

Sherman said the BLM faced a decision — either move items to storage in Boise, or retrofit the maintenance shop with a new shelving system.

"We have a road map of putting everything back."

— Bobby Reis, curator of collections and exhibitions, Oregon Trail Interpretive Center

The latter option kept artifacts close, she said, and will provide repository space for the future.

Each horizontal shelf can support 3,000 pounds, and the individual shelves are on tracks and can be easily rolled back and forth with a wheel-type handle.

A section of heavy-duty shelving can hold 15,000 pounds.

"For the mining collection," Sherman said.

Museum artifacts must be stored in stable temperature and humidity. Larger items are supported, often with specially built structures, to maintain the original shape.

"The new shelving increased our storage space by 60%," Reis said.

Staff didn't remove everything from the center — larger pieces, such as the taxidermy animals, have been protected with boxes and special wrapping to stay in place during construction.

Future of the center

Reis said the renovation presents an opportunity to update the center's informational panels and evaluate the exhibit items — some of which have been on display for 30 years.

"We're hoping to swap out for some new artifacts," he said.

Also, the closure has enabled NHOTIC to create a bigger presence in Baker City by leasing space in the Baker Heritage Museum to build an Oregon Trail Experience.

The museum, 2480 Grove St., is open seven days a week. It closes for the season at the end of October.

Sherman said moving into town has sparked conversations on how the center can be more involved locally, such as providing more interpretive programs.

"We've been making connections with our partners in town," she said.

Dementia

Continued from A1

During her conversations with other swimmers, the issue of dementia came up, and Mastel-Smith said she was encouraged that there was interest locally in helping people with dementia and their families, friends and caregivers.

That led her to set up an "action team" of local residents to meet with service groups such as the Baker Rotary Club and Baker Lions Club, as well as local pastors, to discuss the dementia friendly community concept.

Team members include Ann Marie Roberts, a care partner; Mari Krohn and Joe Hayes of Community Connection; Mark Bogart, a retired teacher and school administrator; Lu-Ann Cook, a nurse practitioner at St. Luke's Eastern Oregon Medical Associates in Baker City; Linda Hudson; Kimberli Anderson; Jean Simpson, a former care partner; Baker County Sheriff Travis Ash; and Gabe Maldonado, the sheriff's office's community service deputy.

Mastel-Smith said she has "learned a lot" during meetings with local residents and groups, including the prevalence of common misconceptions about dementia.

For instance, she said the notion that dementia is an inevitable part of aging — that people are sometimes confused solely because they are elderly — isn't always true.

Some health conditions can cause dementia-like symptoms, she said, ones which can be treated with medications and are thus reversible.

This is quite different from Alzheimer's disease, the most common form of dementia and one for which there is no cure.

Mastel-Smith said she's also learned from law enforcement about cases of people with dementia being victims of financial abuse.

The dementia friendly community concept is well-suited for Baker County because the "risk factors in this county are higher than average," she said.

Baker County's population is older, on average, than for Oregon or the nation as a whole.

As of the 2020 Census, 26.9% of Baker County's 16,800 residents were 65 or older, compared with 18.6% of Oregonians.

Based on that statistic, Baker is the ninth-oldest among Oregon's 36 counties.

Wheeler County, which is also Oregon's least populous county with about 1,500 residents, has highest percentage of people 65 or older, at 36.7%.

The other counties with a higher percentage than Baker are, in order: Curry, 35.5%; Grant, 31.4%; Lincoln, 31%; Wallowa, 29.6%; Gilliam, 28.9%; Tillamook and Coos, both 27.4%.

The first step in establishing a dementia friendly community involves some of the tasks the action team has already set for itself, Mastel-Smith said — raising awareness about dementia and assessing the local needs.

A future goal is to address those needs.

That can include a variety of steps, Mastel-Smith said.

One crucial challenge is making sure the caregivers for people with dementia — most often relatives, and frequently a spouse or an adult child — have the support they need, Mastel-Smith said. Serving as a caregiver can be demanding, and burnout is common.

The presence of a competent caregiver can help people with dementia remain in their homes.

"Caregivers are crucial," Mastel-Smith said.

She pointed out that some people diagnosed with dementia can live alone without needing a caregiver, potentially for many years or even a couple decades.

"There is a wide range of situations," she said.

Other aspects of the dementia friendly community concept aren't quite so obvious.

For instance, Mastel-Smith said the program includes working with retail businesses, such as pharmacies and grocery stories, to help employees recognize the effects of dementia so they can help customers who have symptoms.

Even a small difference in an employee's approach — being sympathetic and helpful rather than annoyed or confrontational, for example — can have a significant effect on how the customer with dementia responds and is affected, Mastel-Smith said.

The Baker County effort is in its early stages, she emphasized. It's not clear, for instance, whether the local group will create a separate nonprofit, or be associated with an existing organization such as Community Connection of Baker County.

The dementia friendly community concept

The movement started in September 2015 after the White House Conference on Aging, according to Dementia Friendly America (DFA) website, dfamerica.org.

The concept is based on Minnesota's statewide initiative, ACT on Alzheimer's. DFA launched in 2015 with pilot communities in Denver, Prince George's County, Maryland, Santa Clara County, California, Tempe, Arizona, and the state of West Virginia.

From the DFA website:

A dementia friendly community is a village, town, city or county that is informed, safe and respectful of individuals with the disease, their families and caregivers and provides supportive options that foster quality of life. Joining DFA means a community is engaging in a process to become more dementia friendly.

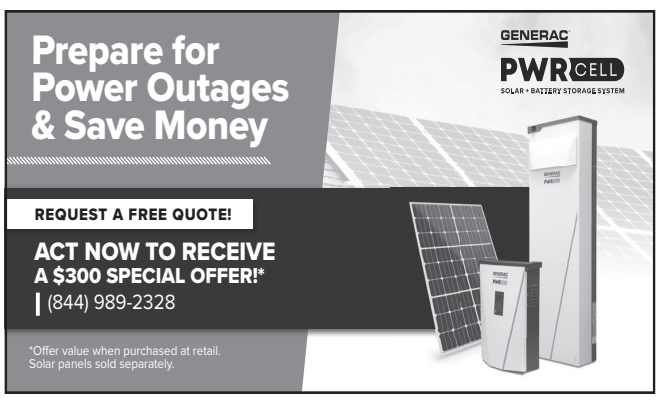
To help communities work towards becoming dementia friendly, DFA offers technical assistance, including a community toolkit, sector specific guidance and best practices synthesized from across the world.

The DFA website includes a list of criteria for dementia friendly communities, including the need to have people with dementia and their caregivers involved in the project.

Other useful information about dementia is available at:

• Alzheimer's Association https://www.alz.org/

• Alzheimer's International https://www.alzint.org/



Sharon L. Karman

July 27, 1940 - September 28, 2022

Sharon Lee Karman, 82, of Baker City passed away on Sept. 28, 2022 at her residence. No public memorial service is planned at this time.

Sharon was born on July 27, 1940 in Riverton, Wyoming, to Richard and Pauline (Sinner) Pearson. She attended high school in Riverton, graduating in 1958 then attending Montana Business College. She worked at Susquehanna Mining Company in Wyoming in her early years and more recently at Baker Vision Clinic, where she worked for 20 years, from 1994 to 2014.

On Dec. 7, 1958 Sharon married Jim Karman in Fort Collins, Colorado. They remained happily married for 64 years. During their life together, they had one daughter, Sheryl. Sharon was very happy to have been able to work with her daughter for the 20 years that she did.

Over the years, Sharon loved scrapbooking, cross stitching, knitting and organizing. She was also a member of the Baker City Church of the Nazarene and an Honorary Soroptimist Member.

Survivors include her husband Jim Karman; daughter Sheryl Blankenship and her husband, Dan; and grandsons, Dr. Derek Blankenship and his wife Macey along with their two kids, Hudson and Hayes, and Dillon Blankenship with his wife Alyssa.

She was preceded in death by her parents, Richard and Pauline Pearson.

Memorial contributions may be made to the Baker County Soroptimists or the American Alzheimer's Association through Gray's West & Co. Pioneer Chapel, 1500 Dewey Ave., Baker City, OR 97814.

To light a candle in memory of Sharon or to offer online condolences to her family, please visit www.grayswestco.com.

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