



Animal sanctuary staff experiences joy, pain

By **TODD ADAMS**
Challis Messenger staff writer

Heart of Idaho Animal Sanctuary has had its joyful successes and painful failures in its first year of operation. With the former outweighing the latter, workers at the no-kill shelter north of Challis have pressed forward with their mission of providing homes to abandoned, neglected and abused animals. Since the sanctuary opened its doors in July 2017, the shelter has adopted out 328 animals — 179 dogs, 146 cats and two rabbits, Assistant Manager Melissa Aguirre said.

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The sad stories, while few, don't make the job easy, said sanctuary founder, CEO and manager Tirzah Stuart. The sanctuary gets calls all the time from people who want to turn in injured feral or homeless cats hit on area roads. The isolation area, individual cat cages and three cat habitats are usually full of felines looking for homes, as are most of the dog kennels.

While Challis' animal control officer Win Happy can impound stray dogs in town, which might lead to their owners being found, next to nothing can be done for cats, Stuart said. "If we made a cat room capable of holding 300 cats, we'd have 300 cats in it," she said. "What we truly need is

a feral cat spay and neuter program," Stuart said. But the city doesn't have the money to do it and grants are few and far between. "I get it," Stuart said of the lack of funds. "We have to put money into our schools and other things. But when you're on the phone and somebody is shouting, 'Help, I have 35 feral cats ...'" Stuart has to tell callers she has no room for cats. She recalls one woman saying, "Oh, so I have to pay someone to come out and shoot them?"

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Mystique is a tortoiseshell-colored cat who survived severe neglect earlier this year and was rescued by Heart of Idaho Animal Sanctuary. She is being fostered by a man who is seeing if his other cats will accept Mystique so he can adopt her. BJ LEWIS PHOTO

Big fundraiser nets seniors \$6,250



Fewer crimes, more arrests in Custer Co. last year

By **SHELLEY RIDENOUR**
Challis Messenger general manager

The Custer County Sheriff's Office handled 73 offenses in 2017, 14 percent fewer than the 85 reported the prior year, according to data tracked by the state. At the same time, the number of arrests increased by 8 percent to 66 from 61 in 2016. Of the 73 offenses, 27 were deemed cleared, according to data from the 2017 Crime in Idaho report released by the Idaho State Police. That's a clearance rate of 37 percent. Within those totals, 22 offenses were reported in the city of Challis, which contracts with the Sheriff's Office for law enforcement. Those 22 offenses were 24 percent fewer than were reported in the city in 2016. Ten of the 22 incidents were cleared by officers. A total of 21 people within the city were arrested last year. The other 51 offenses occurred throughout Custer County. Just 17 of those matters were cleared by law enforcement, a 33 percent clearance rate. A total of 45 people were arrested throughout the county outside of Challis last year. No juveniles were arrested in the county in 2017, according to the report.



SHELLEY RIDENOUR PHOTO

Auctioneer JR Baker and bid spotters Jenny Runnels and Skyler Cutler keep their eyes on the crowd as Baker seeks bids for a basket containing a cuddly bear and other goodies. Sue Hill of Challis was the top bidder for the basket at the Challis Senior Citizens fundraising auction held Sept. 22.

By **SHELLEY RIDENOUR**
Challis Messenger general manager

Locals turned out in a big way to help boost the coffers of the Challis Senior Citizens at the group's annual fundraising dinner, auction and dance. Senior citizens board Treasurer Peggy Parks said a total of \$5,500 was collected at the Sept. 22 event. Seniors raised \$4,900 in the silent and live auctions and contributions for the dinner. Another \$600 in donations were made that night. The live auction generated plenty of laughs and cheers as some bidders dug deep to pay high prices for a few select items. Auctioneer JR Baker kept things lively with jokes, humor and good-natured ribbing of some bidders. One of the items that drew a hefty price was a set of metric wrenches. After the bidding ended above \$100, Baker joked that the successful bidder could have bought the set for far less money at a local store. One of Madge Yacomella's famous pies was sold three times before the lucky third bidder declared she wanted to eat it, not resell it. Pans of leftover



SHELLEY RIDENOUR PHOTO

Challis resident Jim Maurer lists his bid on the bidding sheet in the silent auction portion of the Challis Senior Citizens fundraiser held Sept. 22. Maurer said he was bidding on "guy stuff"

desserts from the dinner were nabbed quickly in the auction. This year's auction featured gift baskets of local produce and canned goods, which garnered hefty bids, too. Baker even let the kids in on the bidding. When bid spotter Jenny Runnels

held up a toy Peterbilt semitrailer Baker queried the crowd about where all the Cutler kids were. "There used to be 500 or 600 of them running around," he said. Indeed three small Cutlers zipped to the auctioneer's table and one convinced his dad, Skyler Cutler, to buy the truck. All three youngsters had a hand on the box as they headed off with their prize. Funds from the event are used for general operating expenses at the senior center. The center operates on money earned from the sale of lunches, donations, fundraisers and a contribution from the Eastern Idaho Community Action Partnership. "We depend on fundraisers," Parks said. The next big fundraiser for the seniors is an indoor garage sale, planned for late winter. But, the seniors have one more major event between now and then — the community Thanksgiving dinner. The seniors provide the meat, and diners bring side dishes to share. The senior center has a new director, Parks said. Edwin Happy manages the center, replacing Sheila Funk who retired.

The number of offenses in Custer County has fluctuated slightly in the last five years, according to the state report. In 2013 there were 60 offenses, 59 in 2014 and 67 in 2015 before spiking at 85 in 2016 and dropping to 73 in 2017. At the same time, the number of arrests has increased each year, from 51 in 2013 to 56 in 2014 to 57 in 2015 to 61 in 2016 and 66 in 2017. Most Custer County offenses fall into two categories — theft and assault. Last year a total of 22 offenses were thefts, 21 were simple assaults, nine were property destruction, seven were burglaries, six were drug violations, three were drug equipment violations, three were aggravated assaults, one was classified as fondling and one auto was stolen.

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Firefighters leave Challis as command center closes

By **THE MESSENGER**

Firefighters continue to make solid progress on the Rabbit Foot Fire, Forest Service officials said this week. The incident command post in Challis closed on Sept. 22,

and scores of firefighters left town as a Type 4 organization assumed command of the fire. Rehabilitation of the fire is nearly complete, according to news release from the Forest Service. Fire managers continue to monitor the fire area and report that fire activity is minimal.

The most active areas are in Corral Creek, Iron Creek and Moyer Creek. The fire spread is backing downhill against the topography. But, in areas of heavy fuel accumulation, the fire continues to burn. While just 20 percent of the fire perimeter is contained, for-

est officials say 82 percent of the fire objectives have been met. The broad closure area for the fire has been defined, but two forest roads remain closed: roads 40047 and 40466. Both roads are within the Salmon-Cobalt Ranger District in Lemhi County. Maps can be

seen at <https://inciweb.nwcg.gov/incident/closures/6090/>.

