

2021 YEAR IN REVIEW

JANUARY

Sisters rider shines in rodeo competition

Adriene Steffen has added to her collection of rodeo trophies with a Reserve Champion finish in pole bending at the Junior World Championships Rodeo held December 7-12 in Fort Worth, Texas.

The 15-year-old rodeo competitor from Sisters has racked up considerable success in the arena, competing nationally since 2017.

Restaurant to open despite ban

For Tom and Jeannie Gilgenberg Buck, keeping their wine bar and bistro closed indefinitely isn't an option. The couple opened Cork Cellars for in-restaurant dining on January 1 — in spite of state mandates prohibiting indoor dining in counties deemed at "extreme risk" in the current surge of COVID-19 cases.

"Tom and I seriously considered closing," Jeannie told *The Nugget* on December 31. "If we don't do this, there will not be a Cork Cellars."

The restaurant opened with the same safety and sanitation protocols that were in place before Governor Kate Brown and the Oregon Health Authority (OHA) imposed tighter restrictions in November. Those restrictions prohibit all indoor dining, gym openings, and indoor entertainment in "extreme risk" counties — including Deschutes — in an effort to blunt a surge in COVID-19 cases that has seen more hospitalizations and fatalities in Oregon than at any time during the pandemic.

The bistro will require patrons wear masks when not at the table eating, will separate diners, and will not offer wine tasting or music events.

The couple argues that restaurants with safety protocols including heavy sanitation efforts in place have not been shown to be a significant factor in COVID-19 spread.

Sisters artist creates 'Pandemic Portraits'

When the world went into lockdown in mid-March 2020, people — when they did venture out of their homes — could be seen wearing masks of various kinds. The masks caught the eye of Sisters artist Paul Alan Bennett.

After much careful thought, Paul, a painter and a printmaker, decided to create portraits of people wearing their masks. And though he's traditionally been known for creating colorful gouache paintings using a "knit stitch," this time Paul limited himself to one color, black, and one format: monotype.

Bennett's first portrait was of a clerk at Ray's Food Place.

"When I posted it on Facebook, it got a lot of response, and I thought I'd do some more," Bennett said.

The 96-page book, "Pandemic Portraits," includes 88 of the monotype images.

Folk festival expanding online programming

Sisters Folk Festival (SFF) has announced a new session of winter programming to expand virtual education outreach programs for adults and youth during COVID-19.

Registration is now open for educational offerings planned for this winter and spring, including multi-week songwriting and performance classes, instrumental music and engineering workshops, and three separate Sisters Songworks offerings taught by both regional and nationally-recognized instructors and musicians.

In response to the global pandemic, SFF redesigned many of their traditional offerings in 2020. The cultural nonprofit is now looking to build on the success of those reimagined programs with a slate of online music education courses and workshops rolling out this winter.

Broadband internet on tap for Camp Sherman

After more than a decade of false starts, broadband internet service is coming to Camp Sherman via Sureline Broadband in Madras.

Local realtor and Camp Sherman native Shane Lundgren has been heading

up a group of Camp Sherman residents since 2009 to secure internet access for the community. According to Lundgren, the original impetus was the government's "No Child Left Behind" program in 2009-10, to bring internet learning opportunities to students at the Black Butte School in Camp Sherman.

Schools set plans for return to in-person learning

All students in the Sisters School District are scheduled to return to some level of in-person learning by February 1, according to a communication sent out January 6 by superintendent Curt Scholl.

Sisters Elementary School has been operating with in-person instruction since early in the school year. The middle school and high school will soon have the opportunity to attend in-person classes on a part-time basis using a hybrid model.

The opening of schools in Sisters comes after Governor Kate Brown announced the move to making school-opening guidelines "advisory" rather than mandatory earlier this month.

School staff begin receiving vaccine

About 30 specialists, para-professionals, and support staff were the first of the Sisters

School District staff members to receive their initial dose of the COVID-19 vaccination. The vaccinations come amidst concern that Oregon's supply may not be as substantial as first reported.

In a news conference on Friday, January 15, Governor Kate Brown expressed her dismay that the total number of available vaccines was apparently misrepresented, but vowed to get as many teachers in Oregon vaccinated as possible in a timely manner, with a target of 12,000 doses a day being maintained. Brown said she is still committed to ensuring Oregon teachers will be vaccinated in large numbers, albeit slightly later than planned, due to the discovery that national reserves of the vaccine are either in shorter supply or nonexistent.

What's happening with Sisters' weather?

Except for a couple of light dustings of snow that quickly came and went, Sisters Country has been remarkably free of winter-like conditions even as we advance deeper into the heart of the cold season.

Last fall weather prognosticators advertised a La Niña was on the way that would likely result in a colder and wetter than normal winter. Not only was her arrival right on time, but she's been gaining strength and is now classified as a strong La Niña.

While scientists aren't quite sure why this La Niña is behaving oddly, many of them suspect climatic teleconnections, the interaction of several different atmospheric circulations with varying time scales. Climate change may also be a player.

Looking ahead from now through the end of March, NOAA's Climate Prediction Center is forecasting below normal temperatures and above normal precipitation levels for our area.

New well will add to Sisters' water system

Sisters is adding a new well to its water system, which will substantially increase its pumping capacity.

At last Wednesday's City Council meeting, the City awarded a public improvement contract to J. P. Prinz Co. LLC in the amount not to exceed \$713,317, the lowest of five bids received for the construction of a new Well 4, Phase B.

Phase A, just completed, was the drilling of the well by Abbas Drilling on land at the east end of the Creekside Campground. While Phase A was underway, the design for the well house and all the equipment (Phase B) was being finalized. The well depth ended up being 293 feet. Work included drilling, casing, screening, grout seal, developing, and testing as required for a complete 1,500-gallons-per-minute well.



Happy New Year!

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