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Hand sanitizer looting forces closure of 18 parks

Zach Urness
Salem Statesman Journal
USA TODAY NETWORK

The looting of hand sanitizer dispensers has forced Marion County to close 17 popular parks amid the coronavirus pandemic.

The parks, which span a large area from Scotts Mills to Salem to the North Santiam canyon, have all been closed after officials decided they could not comply with Gov. Brown's executive order.

The order does allow outdoor recreation facilities to remain open, but only if they post signs about social distancing and restrooms have "trash cans, and soap

and water or hand sanitizer available," the order says. "The hand sanitizer was ripped off the walls at the beginning of the COVID-19 crisis," Marion County information officer Jolene Kelley said. "At this point, we don't have the manpower or resources to closely monitor that and restock it."

"It's unfortunate and disappointing." Parks coordinator Russ Dilley said all the restrooms with hand sanitizer were hit at least once. He said toilet paper is also plundered frequently.

"You put out three new rolls and sure enough, two days later they're all gone," Dilley said. "It's the same old story, the bad people ruin it for everyone else."

While much of Oregon's public lands and camp-

grounds have been closed in an effort to slow the spread of COVID-19, officials pointed to local destinations as a place Oregonians could stretch their legs and enjoy the outdoors.

Marion County's parks might have seemed a good choice. Many are fairly remote and offer trails, green spaces and access to fishing in a setting where social distancing could be possible without a long drive from Salem.

Packsaddle Park, for example, has a boat ramp that allows fishing and floating a popular stretch of the North Santiam River. Joryville Park offers local trails in

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Jerry Danielson, in his fifth year volunteering for Meals on Wheels, loads coolers that will be driven across the city by several drivers, at the First Presbyterian Church in Woodburn, on March 25, 2020. In an effort to maintain social distancing practices, the program is shifting from hot to frozen meal preparation. MADELEINE COOK / STATESMAN JOURNAL

Schools, nonprofits help to fill food needs

Christena Brooks
Special to Salem Statesman Journal
USA TODAY NETWORK

Every Monday morning in Mt. Angel, school busses still rumble through town, stopping at homes and apartments.

But instead of students, the big yellow busses are filled with meals. Volunteers and paid bus drivers are delivering free weekly food boxes to about 250 students who won't get breakfast and lunch at school during this extended break from classes. The "food bus" ran its first route on March 23 and will keep making deliveries until schools reopen, said program coordinator Gayle Schmidt.

From school lunches, to restaurants, to senior meal programs, the food service sector has been hit hard by Oregon's social distancing policies meant to slow the spread of the Coronavirus. The sudden disruption to food services has meant closures and profound changes for eateries and meal programs in the East Valley.

Mt. Angel

In Mt. Angel, the school district is tapping its federal summer meal funds to offer free grab-and-go breakfasts and lunches to all children 18 and under. Meals are available at St. Mary's Public School from 10:30 a.m. to noon, Monday through Friday. About 240 kids have been getting these daily meals, Schmidt said. They can choose between taking daily meals in person and receiving weekly boxes by bus.

Meals on Wheels, the low-cost meal delivery program for seniors and adults with disabilities, switched to frozen TV-style dinners this week, and their drivers are now delivering all seven meals to clients on one day, Tuesday. This change affects just over a dozen residents in town, said Ginger Bork-Al-len, coordinator.

"Everybody seems to be doing really well," she said. "It's unique because our drivers have relationships with clients, and they are just as worried about us as we are worried about them."

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Grocers hustle to meet demand

Online, delivery orders overwhelm stores with shortages of staff, supplies

Emily Teel
Salem Statesman Journal
USA TODAY NETWORK

As Governor Kate Brown ordered Oregonians to stay home, grocery workers at Roth's Fresh Market are scrambling to restock shelves emptied of all-purpose flour, ranch dressing, crescent rolls and more.

Grocery stores have been designated as essential businesses and will remain open during the stay-at-home directive. Grocery retailers are hustling to meet the booming demand for delivery and curbside pickup, taking supply and staff shortages in stride, and attempting to reduce risks for shoppers and employees.

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LifeSource harvester Chandra Timm shops for customers placing online orders at LifeSource Natural Foods in Salem on March 23. The store has installed dividers at each register to limit customer and employee contact. MADELEINE COOK / STATESMAN JOURNAL



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Capi Lynn
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Walk of Honor continues despite outbreak

The solemn ceremony at the veterans' home in Lebanon can happen day or night, any day of the week.

Available staff and residents line the halls to pay tribute when a deceased veteran is escorted from the nursing home.

Veterans stand and salute if they're able as the flag-draped gurney passes. Those in wheelchairs try to find the strength to stand, even if it requires support on each side.

Non-veterans place their hands over their hearts. At the end of the procession, before the gurney is loaded into a transportation vehicle, the flag is folded and presented to a member of the family or other representative.

It's called the "Walk of Honor," a tradition bestowed upon every veteran who has died since the Edward C. Allworth Veterans' Home opened in 2014.

And it's a tradition that remains intact despite the coronavirus.

The most recent Walk of Honor was Sunday, March 22, for a veteran in his 90s who died of complications related to COVID-19. He tested positive March 11 and had underlying medical conditions, according to the Oregon Health Authority.

"In these unprecedented times, traditions are more important than ever," said Kelly Fitzpatrick, director of the Oregon Department of Veterans' Affairs, which has homes for vets in Lebanon and The Dalles. "We will continue to ensure our brothers and sisters in arms receive every honor they deserve while following public health guidelines."

Taking extra precautions

When the virus invaded the 12-acre Lebanon campus, staff were adamant about continuing the Walk of Honor, willing to adjust as necessary to prevent the spread and ensure the safety of all those involved.

"We started thinking through what it was going to look like, although we were all hopeful we would not have to do one," program director Jeremy Woodall said.

Woodall, an Army veteran who lives in Stayton with his wife and two children, often leads the procession, folds the flag with another staffer and presents it to the family.

When the veteran died early Sunday, Woodall said the usual email was sent inviting staff and residents to participate — with one exception. They would only gather outside for the tribute, lining the sidewalks while maintaining appropriate social distancing.

Inside, multiple precautionary sterilization measures were taken to protect against the spread of the virus.

Woodall said Virex, a powerful disinfectant and cleaner used in places such as nursing homes, hospitals, schools and hotels, was sprayed on each layer covering the deceased, including a Quilt of Valor and the American flag on top.

"We have a responsibility to take care of ourselves, and we don't want to touch anything contaminated in the room and then be presenting the flag to the family," Woodall said.

That day, he and nurse Monica Claffin, as they have dozens of times, folded the flag 13 times in accordance with Honor Guard standards.

Woodall said they did not wear gloves because they trusted the sanitizing protocol.

With increased media attention on the facility, where 15 residents and one staff member have tested positive for COVID-10, staff took additional measures to provide privacy for the family of the deceased.

Getting closure

The Walk of Honor completes a mission the veterans' home has had since Day 1 — to honor its veterans from application to discharge. Some residents do return home but for many, this is their last stop. A physician's recommendation for skilled nursing care is required to be admitted to one of Oregon's veterans' homes.

The tradition in Lebanon was forged with the original administration, led by Kelly Odegaard. In his experience working in other types of nursing homes, when someone died staff would clear the halls and secretly whisk the body out the back.

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