

Appeal Tribune

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Back in the spotlight



Members of the Valley Shakespeare Company perform "Twelfth Night" last week at Western Oregon University. CONNOR RADNOVICH/STATESMAN JOURNAL

Artists savor each moment in return to the stage

Bill Poehler and Natalie Pate
Salem Statesman Journal
USA TODAY NETWORK

Hannah Kellebrew's life changed a lot in the past year. She graduated from Western Oregon University, got married, got COVID-19, recovered and started a new job at Dallas Retirement Village. Still, there was something missing. With coronavirus-related restrictions in Oregon making live performances in arts like music, comedy and theater nearly im-

possible over the past year, Kellebrew couldn't get on stage in front of an audience. For a time, she felt like she lost her purpose in life.

Thursday night, July 22, when she delivered the line, "I am the man," as Viola in "Twelfth Night" (or "What You Will"), a few hundred people sitting in the cool grass of the outdoor stage at Western Oregon University roared with laughter.

The reaction Kellebrew elicited the opening night of the Valley Shakespeare Company's production of Shakespeare's excited her so much that she flubbed a couple of lines later in the play. That moment, though, made everything she went through over the past year worth it.

"It's been two years since I've had this feeling, and I was extremely nervous, but nothing bad can happen

Twelfth Night (or What You Will)

7:30 p.m., July 29, 30, 31 at the Leinwand outdoor stage, Western Oregon University. For more information, go to wou.edu/valley-shakespeare-company.

The Severin Sisters

6:30 p.m. Aug. 4, Monmouth Main Street Park; 5:15 p.m. Aug. 7, Homer Davenport Music Festival, Coolidge & McClaine Park, Silverton; 5 p.m. Sept. 4, Trinity Vineyards, Salem. For more information www.severinsisters.com.

Live Comedy

Friday open mic coming up on Aug. 6 at Keizer Homegrown Theatre on the second floor of 980 Chemawa Rd NE. The show starts at 8 p.m., with seating beginning at 7:30. Buy tickets and learn about other PNW Comedy shows across the region at pnwcomedy.com.

to me right now," Kellebrew said. "I'm golden."

Performers like Kellebrew had a large part of their identity taken away over the past year. Some tried performing virtually or in small, socially distanced shows. Playing to a camera or in front of a distant, masked audience was a poor substitute for what it's like in front of a full, live one.

And audiences are hungrier for live performances than ever. They show up early, mingle with friends they haven't seen in years and experience something they didn't know if they would be able to do again.

"People are just so joyful to be out and about and having an experience again, a real-live experience," said Amy Severin, one-third of The Severin Sisters, a roots music group from Salem. "Having had that taken away, having that back, we're forever going to be

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Wildfires bring more 'unhealthy air' days in recent years

Tracy Loew
Salem Statesman Journal
USA TODAY NETWORK

Salem had its first "unhealthy air" day on record in 2014, when smoke from multiple wildfires settled over the city.

That increased to two days in 2015, two in 2017, and four in 2018. In 2020, Salem recorded 11 unhealthy air days, including seven that were considered "hazardous."

From 1985 to 2014, Eugene had just two days with air quality rated as unhealthy. It's had between one and 22 unhealthy air quality days for seven of the past eight years.

Across the state, the number of unhealthy air quality days caused by wildfires are increasing, the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality's annual wildfire smoke trends report shows.

The report tracks wildfire-related air quality trends in 24 Oregon communities, using data from DEQ's Air Quality Index.

The index measures levels of fine particulate matter, or PM 2.5, the primary pollutant in wildfire smoke. It categorizes air quality, from best to worst, as good, moderate, unhealthy for sensitive groups, unhealthy, very unhealthy and hazardous.

The report calls the number of days in the four

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Law forbids requiring vaccine for health care workers

Tatiana Parafiniuk-Talesnick
Register-Guard
USA TODAY NETWORK

A 32-year-old law sets Oregon apart as the only state in the country where vaccines can't be mandated for health care workers, firefighters, law enforcement and probation officers.

The 1989 bill was introduced during the HIV epidemic to ensure health care workers are alerted when they might be exposed to infectious diseases and have access to preventative immunizations. But a one-sentence item in the bill that says immunization shall not be required as a condition of work has set a unique challenge for health care and emergency services employers.

When Dr. Patrick Luedtke, Lane County's senior public health officer, moved to Oregon a decade ago, he was unaware of the law.

"I quickly bumped into it," Luedtke said. "I was working with a hospital and they wanted to mandate the influenza vaccine for their health care workers and I helped them write up a policy and a procedure, and I decided to run it by the (state's) medical director for immunizations."

He was surprised to learn about ORS 433.416, a huge barrier to his policy or anything like it.

"It was a rude awakening, and that is the law of the land here in Oregon," Luedtke said. "It's a challenge, as you might imagine, in regular times and even more so during pandemics."

Some can require vaccination

As the delta variant of the coronavirus continues to spread throughout the country, many health care workers in Oregon remain unvaccinated.

According to data released from the Oregon Health Authority earlier this month, 70% of health care workers are vaccinated — 5% more than the general population. However, numbers vary depending on vocation. While 94% of dentists and 87% of medical doctors got their shots, only 57% of certified nursing assistants and 56% of EMTs are vaccinated.

Long-term care facilities that voluntarily reported weekly COVID-19 vaccination data to the state had 84% of residents and 62% of staff completely vaccinated as of May 9, the most recent data available.

The state on June 1 mandated long-term care facilities provide data, but that data isn't yet public. OHA officials said the new data might be released in mid-August.

In the meantime, people with loved ones in these facilities have to depend on vaccination information that's voluntarily shared or learn more when there's an outbreak.

There are currently two active care facility outbreaks in Marion County and one in Polk County, according to Oregon Health Authority. There are 11 COVID-19 cases at Salem Transitional Care, seven at Dallas Retirement Village Health Center and three at Providence Benedictine Nursing Center.

A large outbreak hit a Florence memory care and assisted living facility west of Eugene earlier this month and so far infected nine staff members and 20 residents at Spruce Point Assisted Living and Memory Care. As of Thursday, 25 have been infected, ac-

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Some state employees eligible for 'hazard pay' One-time payments between \$1,050, \$1,550

Connor Radnovich
Salem Statesman Journal
USA TODAY NETWORK

State employees who worked mandatory, in-person hours during the pandemic will be eligible for one-time "COVID hazard payments" after new tentative labor agreements were struck early Tuesday morning.

Workers who logged between 480 and 1,039 hours between March 8, 2020 and June 30, 2021 are expected to receive \$1,050, while those who worked more than 1,040 hours are in line for \$1,550.

This applies to all workers, whether they are union members or not.

"State workers masked up and did their jobs through a pandemic," said Melissa Unger, executive director of SEIU Local 503. "Hazard pay is a recognition of the risks they took to keep essential services



Miniature State of Oregon flags are displayed in the Senate floor in the Capitol in Salem, Ore. on Tuesday, Feb. 9, 2021. BRIAN HAYES / STATESMAN JOURNAL

like food assistance, healthcare and infrastructure running."

In addition, AFSCME members who logged more than 200 hours of in-person overtime during the same timeframe are slated to receive \$575. SEIU also expects to have the same benefit for its members, but is still in negotiations with the state on this detail.

It's unclear if this benefit is also extended to non-union-represented state workers.

The tentative agreements still need to be ratified by a vote of all members.

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