

Marion County wants to talk syphilis as COVID-19 spikes

Bill Poehler

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When Marion County Public Health Division director Katrina Rothenberger concluded a presentation recently about the spread of COVID-19 and the importance of vaccinations, the county commissioners didn't have anything to say about the virus that has killed 348 county residents.

Instead, Commissioner Danielle Bethell asked Rothenberger to talk about "the other issue" the county is having: an increase in sexually transmitted diseases, specifically syphilis.

Rothenberger said it is an issue she's concerned the county hasn't put enough time and effort into preventing "because we have been focused on COVID."

She noted Marion County had the state's first case of a stillbirth due to syphilis immediately before the pandemic.

She then went on to say the county is not able to call everyone who has COVID-19 through its contact tracing pro-



Marion County Commissioner Kevin Cameron speaks to community members about recovery steps on Friday, Sept. 25, 2020 in Detroit, Oregon. ABIGAIL DOLLINS / STATESMAN JOURNAL

cedures, and "we need to be able to think about these other serious health issues."

Commissioner Colm Willis agreed. "There are a number of diseases that impact our community that you guys keep working on and have been working on over the past year even though it seems all the news is about COVID," Commissioner Colm Willis said. "These other diseases can also be deadly. A per-

son is just as dead if they die from syphilis as if they die from COVID."

Syphilis is a curable sexually transmitted disease that caused 128 stillbirths or infant deaths in the United States in 2019, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Marion County reported 96 cases of syphilis in 2019, according to the Oregon Health Authority.

In comparison, there have been 263,164 cases and 3,086 deaths attributed to COVID-19 in Oregon from March 2020 through Wednesday, according to the Oregon Health Authority, including the 27,724 cases and 348 deaths in Marion County.

There have been 629,139 deaths from COVID-19 in the United States, according to the CDC.

Commissioner Kevin Cameron attempted to bring the conversation back to the pandemic, reiterating the county data showing the "very, very small percentage" of those who have been vaccinated are hospitalized with the virus.

"Those vaccines are working," he said.

County officials urged people to get vaccinated rather than imposing restrictions or mandates.

Marion County was one of the first local governments to drop indoor mask mandates for vaccinated people in its offices when it did so in June.

The commissioners approved a resolution supporting local oversight of COVID-19 response on Aug. 11 after a public hearing where a large group of people who were largely unmasked – prior to the reinstatement of indoor mask mandates – were vocal about their dislike of mask mandates in schools.

Marion County reported 66.6% of people ages 18 and older have been vaccinated and of the 175,000 people vaccinated, there have been a reported 972 breakthrough cases.

The county has had 13 deaths and is averaging 128 new cases a day since the start of August, its highest rate of new cases since the start of the pandemic.

Bill Poehler covers Marion County for the Statesman Journal. Contact him at bpoeehler@statesmanjournal.com or [Twitter.com/bpoeehler](https://twitter.com/bpoeehler)

Obituaries

Martha Jane Todd Wertz

June 10, 1922-August 19, 2021

Martha Jane Todd Wertz peacefully left her earthly journey in the morning hours of Thursday, August 19th, 2021.

Martha was born in Missouri to Owen & Ivah Todd, occupying a place right in the middle of a healthy pack of, eventually, 12 Children. She attended grade school near Hale Missouri—barefoot in the summer and wearing hand-me-down shoes and flour sack dresses, sewn by Ivah, during the school year. During the Depression Years, Owen was searching for better work to support his growing family. Relatives in Oregon encouraged them to move west. They moved to the Willamette Valley when Martha was beginning her teen years. Her parents packed up all the kids and one uncle to drive west in ONE Old pick-up truck. Owen, Ivah, Uncle "Whiss", and one baby rode up front, as the rest of the kids sat in an enclosed space with side benches in the bed of the vehicle, taking turns laying down in the middle for a rest.

Owen found farm work on the Oscar Loe farm in Evan's Valley where they lived in a large two story house with a large wrap around front porch. The younger kids attended Evan's Valley grade school while, Martha and the older sibs attended Silverton High School. Martha graduated from Silverton High in 1940. She and her sister, Lela, were close school buddies in those years and continued as best friends always. We can still hear them laughing together.

A romance budded on the "Loe" farm in 1940 during the summer "Threshing" season when Roger Wertz came to work and Martha was helping Ivah cook for the Crew. After dating for a few months, the couple were married at the home of Roger's parents' in Aurora, Oregon, with Roger's brother Dale and his wife Ernestine "standing up" for them. Martha wore a beautiful shade of burgundy red velvet dress and "Rod" was in a smart dark suit. Such a handsome couple!

During the WWII years Roger served in the Army, first "State Side" and then in Guam. Also during those years, their 2 children were born: Donald Dean in 1942 and Karen Lee in 1945. Martha lived with relatives in the Willamette Valley, caring for the children while Roger was away.

Roger & Martha lived in various places in the Willamette Valley, Oregon: The City of Donald, McClain St. Silverton, and Maple Ave., Silverton, and Main St, Silverton. On Maple Ave., Rod and Martha grew a large garden, and raised chickens and a beef cow each year. As a Wife and Mother, Martha canned and preserved every kind of fruit, vegetable, and meat one could grow or gather. The family enjoyed eating all the results of her hard work all winter long. She took her children to pick strawberries and green beans in the summers, working alongside them in the fields, usually as "row boss"! She was teaching them the value of hard work and the joy of having some

money of their own.

Martha could make Gravy out of anything. And we all loved it! She was famous for her cast iron fried chicken with mashed potatoes and milk gravy & home raised roast beef with gravy--not to mention sausage (or Bacon) gravy over home-made baking powder biscuits. Her hand kneaded yeast bread was a treat also.

Sewing was one of Martha's strong suits. She mostly sewed clothes for herself and Karen. Notable were the outstanding formal dresses she created for Karen's School Dances. She attended Marion County Home Extension and even made herself a beautiful pair of dress gloves. She taught Karen to sew and embroider.

Martha Jane mended everything!

Martha had various employment around Silverton: working at the "Rex-all" Drug Store Ice Cream counter, office work at the "JC Penny Store" and of course as a "Beautician" at "Jean's Beauty Salon". She attended "Beauty School" after both children had left for college. She did lots of haircuts, "permanent waves" and "spit curls" over her many years at the "Beauty Shop". Every Saturday she washed, cut, and "set" her mother's hair so that Ivah was ready for Sunday Church. "Jean's" was definitely a place to catch up on town stories.

She and Roger faithfully attended & supported the Silverton Methodist Church where they cultivated many wonderful friendships. They enjoyed traveling in their "5th Wheel" camper with many of these friends. After Roger retired, they traveled to places all over the USA, making a point to visit each state capitol and collecting stickers to decorate the camper from each of those states.

When Roger preceded Martha in death, times got hard for her. The house seemed too big, empty, and lonely. She wanted to move to a facility where, she said; "Someone else can cook for me". She chose to live at Mt. Angel Towers, where, "low and behold", some of her High School class mates were also living. She enjoyed "sit down" meals, family visits, and time for companionship at the "Towers" for 5 years. She then moved to "Davenport Place" in Silverton where she was lovingly cared for during her remaining 6 years.

Martha cherished her Children, Grand Children, and Great Grand Children, clapping, laughing and hugging each arrival, even up to her last days. She will be sorely missed here, but she is at rest, joining the ones she loved that have gone before her.

Biological Family:

Son, Don, deceased-2019,

Daughter, Karen (Russ) Elliott

3 Grandsons: Hank Elliott + his daughters, Remi & Saffi Elliott

Jude Elliott (Shelly Elliott)

Todd Elliott (Cathi Elliott) + children, Easton & Eleanor Elliott

Lou Ann Johnson Maass

SALEM - Lou Ann Johnson Maass (Hatteberg) passed away Monday, August 23rd in Salem She was born in Silverton, Oregon January 1, 1931, where she resided until 2019 when she moved to Orchard Heights Assisted Living in West Salem. She made many new friends there and will be missed by many. She loved working in the courtyard, planting various flowers for everyone to enjoy. She also recruited many residents to help her. Over the years, she not only enjoyed her flowers but made many quilts for family members and others.



Survivors include her daughter, Darlene "Sue" Scherf (Tom) of Keizer, Grandchildren Daniel Neadow (Brandy) of Silverton, Jennie Kime (Dan) of Wilsonville, Tonya Neadow of Keizer and Erik Jacobsen of Monmouth, 10 great grandchildren and 1 great great granddaughter.

Memorial service will be held Saturday, Sep. 11, 2021 at 2:00 pm at Immanuel Lutheran Church, Silverton. In lieu of flowers contributions may be made to Immanuel Lutheran Church.

Live Stream Links: www.facebook.com/immanuelilverton or www.youtube.com/immanuelilverton

arrangements by Unger Funeral Chapel - Silverton.



Margaret Grant

Oct 10, 1920 - July 4, 2021

Margaret was born in Red Deer, Alberta, Canada to James R. and Margaret M. Waldron. The family re-located to Bainbridge Island, Washington, when she was a young child. After graduating from Bainbridge High School, she attended college and taught school in Eastern Washington for 3 years. During WW2, she moved back home to help her parents while her brothers were fighting in the war. There, she learned computer data entry at the Winslow Shipyard. She spent the rest of her working life in administration and managerial positions in Seattle and Portland. She retired in 1983.

Margaret passed away at age 100 in her home in Mt Angel Towers, Oregon. She was preceded in death by her son, James Webb. She is survived by a son, Robert Webb, two granddaughters, Crystal and Athena and three great-grandsons.



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