

CHECKS

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Island City before returning to work May 17. During that time, though, the 26-year-old La Grande resident did not receive any benefits. She said she has filed for nine weeks now.

“There were definitely factors that play into why I haven’t gotten my unemployment yet, on top of it being extremely delayed,” she said. “I have only just now started to see progress.”

Turley reached out by phone to get her claim processed but ran into a recurring problem, she said, thousands of times.

“I called in the first maybe two weeks of the shutdown. I called the Oregon unemployment main numbers, I’m not joking, maybe 7,000 times,” she said, later clarifying she couldn’t keep track of the number of times she called. “It was always busy.... I was getting a letter each week that they had gotten my weekly claims and to keep filing.”

One day in mid-May, before she went back to work, she got four letters

“I called in the first maybe two weeks of the shutdown. I called the Oregon unemployment main numbers, I’m not joking, maybe 7,000 times.”

Emily Turley, who was laid off for two months from her position at Lucky’s Pub & Eatery

— including at least one that required her action — but some were well out of date.

“One letter said please respond within five days, or we will make a decision. It was dated April 12,” she said.

Turley’s earnings while working at Lucky’s prior to the layoff left her just short of enough income to have her claim filed based solely on that position, she said. Her claim, she said, had to take her prior employment at HWY 30 Cannabis, a medical marijuana store in La Grande, into account.

“The reason it was delayed was they had to investigate my employment,” she said. “I put in my two weeks and resigned from my job there. They have to determine it was a grave enough

reason to leave to issue the unemployment.”

Turley did receive her stimulus check from the federal government, but she said the last two months have been stressful.

“Currently my bills are past due. I’m going on two months of being past due. I cleaned homes a little bit. Scraping by, for sure,” she said, adding later, “I get very stressed when my bills aren’t paid. I care about my credit and have always paid my bills on time.”

She received help from her family, was able to get food stamps and has picked up a rental assistance packet from Community Connections.

Turley was one of the first employees brought back at Lucky’s because she wasn’t getting unemployment, and she is

working 40 hours a week again.

“Made \$500 in tips this past weekend,” she said. “I needed it so bad. I’m very grateful. People are being generous on top of being grateful things are back.”

Teresa Moody also was out of work for nearly two months.

The self-employed hairstylist and owner of All About You Salon in La Grande closed on March 23, when Brown announced the state’s shutdown mandate.

“We kind of have to do what she says,” Moody, 55, said.

She filed her first claim online in early April and kept filing weekly, and kept hitting a roadblock — one she didn’t understand.

“I got a letter that said my claim couldn’t be processed. I kept claiming online,” she said. “I would get the letters that they couldn’t process the claim. I have not received anything other than denials.”

After a few weeks without success online, she tried to phone in and, like Turley, ran into the busy signal.

“I tried to call in one day 700 times to the 800

number,” she said, anecdotally noting that she learned that day her phone log deletes prior calls after 200. “I tried at different times during the day. You can get through after hours.... I even attempted the Bend office number and it was always busy.”

A week later, she finally got through late in the morning.

“When I put my Social Security number in I was put on hold. I was on hold the whole time, and was on my home computer,” she said. “At 12:00 the phone disconnected and I got a busy signal.”

Moody finally was given a suggestion to try WorkSource Oregon, and when she heard back, she received some stunning news — a fact, she attributes, to the state’s antiquated unemployment computer system.

“Someone called me back and wanted my Social Security number for my claim. I gave it to him. (He) asked me to repeat my name. That was not the name associated with my Social Security number.”

She was not, however, a victim of identity theft. Rather, she said, her pre-

vious married name — Webb — was attached to her Social Security number, even though she has been married to her current husband since 1998.

Moody and her husband continue to wait for their stimulus check, and she also was unable to get Pandemic Unemployment Assistance through the CARES Act.

Still, they have been able to get by, dipping into their “nest egg” and relying on her husband’s railroad retirement board and sickness benefit from his time with Union Pacific.

Moody was able to reopen her salon May 21 but only can see about half of the customers she typically would in a day because of additional cleansing measures.

One of her frustrations during the last two months was the lack of communication from the state.

“Obviously that ball was dropped, and I know these are unprecedented times” Moody said. “No one saw this coming. You kind of did, but didn’t, (so) why would you tell people that you’re going to have their back (if) your system can’t control it?”

AUCTION

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Preparing for the sale this year posed unique challenges. Last year, Amy Herron’s middle son, Gabe, showed a goat in 4-H for the first time. This year, her youngest, Ben, also has a goat he is selling.

Earlier this week, the Herrons, from Imbler, set up to shave their Boer goats — 12-year-old Gabe’s goat is named Timmy, while 10-year-old Ben has Jimmy. Amy said last year, they learned in person how to trim the animal when Gabe prepped to show his goat for the first time.

But with the social distancing measures, they spent a lot of time watching videos online for refreshers on what the show animals needed to look like.

“(Last year) we had people actually able to help us through the process. They could come and show us what we needed to do,” Herron said. “Not having people be able to come and show us has been a big difference this time. This year I have to try to remember what we did last year, and like I said we’ve watched a lot of videos, made a lot of phone calls, emailed, texted a lot of people (asking), ‘How do I do this again?’”

Herron trimmed the first goat, Timmy, herself Monday, then on Tuesday showed her sons what she did while they took turns shaving a side of the second animal, Jimmy. She also took care of the trouble areas such as the legs — the animal’s “socks” are to be left untrimmed, she said — tail, neck and face.

“You leave from their ankles and knees down basically, and then you’re supposed to leave that flag on their tail. That’s what all the videos have told us,” Herron said.

The family said Timmy had a tough go Monday, so Tuesday they kept him nearby while Jimmy went under the shears.

“This goat was freaking out,” Ben Herron said. “That one was, too.” It worked out, though, as the animal rarely flinched during the hour-long process.

“Yeah, someone who knows what they’re doing could probably do it faster,” Amy Herron said with a laugh.

Ben Herron seemed to enjoy his turn. “I actually like this,” he said while he worked on his goat’s right side. “This is fun. You’re getting a haircut, bro.”

The 10-year-old spent the latter part of the pro-



Gabe Herron, 12, trims the back of Jimmy, his brother’s goat, Tuesday afternoon at the family’s home in Imbler.

Staff photo by Ronald Bond



Amy Herron does touch-up work on Jimmy the goat as she helps her sons prepare for the Eastern Oregon Livestock Show’s auction, which will be virtual this year for the first time.

Staff photo by Ronald Bond

cess while his brother took a turn and his mom did touch-up work holding the goat in the instances it did get jumpy.

“Hey, buddy, it’s alright,” he said to Jimmy.

“It was interesting,” Ben said at the conclusion of the trim. “It was weird, I’m not used to cutting hair. It was kind of fun.”

All that remains is cleaning up the animals, weighing, filming and sending in the details.

Amy Herron said both animals are about 85 pounds, and by the time of the sale “should be about perfect.” Goats must weigh in between 75-130 pounds.

“It’s stressful, trying to

unusual sale.

“It’s fun, but it is stressful,” she said. “There were times this year when I was thinking why did we do this? The guys have done a good job.”

Buyers — who Friday will be able to register on the same site — will be able to see the orders of the entries so they can jump on to bid rather than wait through the entire auction.

“You can kind of know what time of day kids will be showing,” Smith said.

Smith also said buyers will be able to give “add-ons” — extra money outside of the sale — but they don’t have to wait until auction day.

“That option can be done ahead of the auction,” she said.

She also spoke with optimism on how she believes the sale will go, noting that even during an unprecedented time and downturn, businesses want to back the youth of the community.

“I think it’s going to go well,” Smith said. “All of us on the auction committee, the chair sub-committee, they are also getting calls. People want to know how to support kids. People are worrying about making sure the kids are supported.”

MIRACLES

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“I must admit, I rolled my eyes around trying to see who was asking me that question,” she said.

Donnell determined God was speaking to her and replied, “Father, I think I would like to go to heaven right now.”

The questioner, who Donnell is certain was God, asked if she had forgotten that a few weeks prior he gave her a mandate to write out all of the miracles she had experienced in her life. But she had not started on the project.

“So I guess I better stay awhile longer and do what I told you I would do,” Donnell answered.

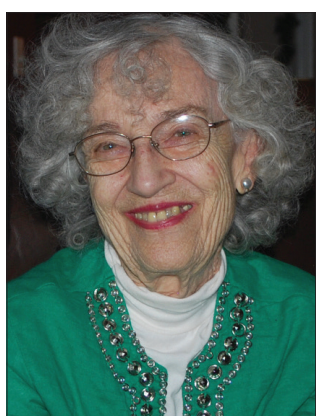
She wrote her book on a decades old IBM personal computer and enjoyed the process, just as she normally does.

“When I’m writing I get so involved that after three hours I think, ‘Where did the time go?’” Donnell said.

“Mandated Miracles” is Donnell’s first book but not her first foray into writing. She has written numerous short stories, been a leader of the local Right Writers group and attended writing conferences throughout the state, said Bobbi Allstott, a longtime friend of Donnell who lives in Central Point, Idaho, and previously lived in La Grande.

“She has never stopped opening herself up to learning,” said Allstott, who helped Donnell get “Mandated Miracles” published by Amazon.com.

Those Donnell writes



Contributed photo Evelyn Donnell, 93, of La Grande, has written her first book, a personal account of miracles. She plans to write a romance novel next.

about in her new book include her husband, Stephen, who died 2018. The couple had been married 69 years. Stephen Donnell, an engineer, was active in the community and not afraid to speak out on local issues. Evelyn, calling him the love of her life, writes about Stephen with wit and charm. “Not long ago my husband took a solo flight to heaven. I’m sure he is there now, probably talking with angel engineers about how to build needed structures on planets in space,” Evelyn Donnell wrote.

Donnell, who grew up in Michigan and once taught kindergarten, moved to La Grande decades ago. Allstott said that members of the Right Writers have been encouraging Donnell to write a romance novel ever since she read aloud the draft of its opening chapter several years ago, which piqued unceasing curiosity. “They have never stopped asking about her characters,” Allstott said.

FIREWORKS

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The show was moved to Union in 2018 from La Grande because Eastern Oregon University could no longer host the fireworks due to construction on campus. The show had been conducted at EOU for at least three decades.

Imbler Mayor Mike McLean said his city also essentially had no choice but to cancel its parade due to the pandemic.

“We’re very sorry, but it had to be done,” McLean said.

The mayor noted that with the cancellation of the county’s fireworks show, the

parade might have drawn an especially large crowd, which would have made it even more difficult to maintain social distancing requirements.

And the East Oregonian, The Observer’s related paper, reported the Shake the Lake fireworks show at Wallowa Lake also has been canceled.

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