

MASKS

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to wear masks is ridiculous and also plans to homeschool her 9-year-old daughter.

“I would rather not homeschool but I am more than capable,” Sandgren said. “Rather than expose my daughter to all of the winter viruses like cold and flu and we now have the lovely COVID-19 to contend with, I can keep her home.”

However, not all parents see an issue with the mandate. Alexia Briggs, who runs Sweet Pea Daycare, La Grande, has two children, 4 and 8, who happily wear masks.

“They both see it as fun with designs that appeal to them but then again they’re not out in public a lot,” Briggs said.

La Grande resident Nancy Arceo-Davila said her son, 4, and daughter, 15, are happy to wear the masks. When her son goes with her and her daughter to the store, he watches them put on their masks and points to his mouth to indicate he is waiting for his, Arceo-Davila said.

“He knows not to take it off and won’t touch it,” Arceo-Davila said. “As soon as we leave the store and take our mask off, he follows what we are doing. He doesn’t hesitate, its like it is not even there. He is such a trooper.”

Arceo-Davila said talking to her eldest about the mask has helped with the transition. She said having a positive attitude toward wearing masks and discussing the importance of the mask helps children understand why they have to wear them, even if it is uncomfortable at first.

“I think that everyone is different and not all children are the same, some will do great and others won’t,” Arceo-Davila said. “And for the children who don’t do so well with the mask I would hope that parents would look at other alternatives that may provide some protection.”

Arceo-Davila said her daughter considers wearing a mask to be essential when



Photo contributed by Sweet Pea Daycare

Children from Sweet Pea Daycare in La Grande play outside. Starting Friday, Oregon requires children age 5 and older to wear masks in indoor public spaces.

leaving the house. She said her daughter mentioned one night at dinner that people can’t leave the house without their phone and keys, and now a mask is part of that list of items.

Day care providers may struggle

Painted Panda Daycare provider Trisha Ingram said if her day care in La Grande has to follow the mandate, it could cause serious problems. Some of the children Ingram supervises have sensory problems and a mask would be overwhelming for them. Other children, she said, may struggle with a dramatic change in their routine.

“I have complied with all the new rules and regulations, have stayed away from friends and activities I enjoy,” Ingram said. “I agreed to do the emergency day care needed to support essential workers, which raised the risk to my own family. But I felt it was my obligation to keep the children in my day care to as much of a routine as possible. I have been open for 19 years and this rule might be the straw that breaks the camel’s back.”

Ingram said the mandate

at her day care also would cause issues at home.

“I have children at my day care 11 to 12 hours a day, sometimes the same children are here for the whole 12 hours,” Ingram said. “My whole family would have to wear masks in their own home for most of the time they are home, and all three wear masks all day and evenings at their own jobs already.”

Briggs said mandating masks seems like a reasonable request for adults, but she isn’t so sure it is reasonable for children. As a home day care owner, Briggs said she does not believe the mandate will affect her business drastically. She said if her day care has to comply with those older than 5 years old, she has some concerns.

“The struggle will be losing the connection for children that my home is their home away from home,” Briggs said. “I take care of children from a few months old to 8 years old currently. A majority of my children are luckily under the age of 5 years. But I see that in itself being an issue as some children would feel like they’re being singled out.”

RULES

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of typical capacity — but stepped its reopening plans back when the outbreak occurred. The church has been meeting online in small group set-ups during the pandemic and likely will continue to do so for Sundays.

“We want to keep those small groups alive,” he said, adding those could also be the church’s “long-term solution.”

Hefner said the church is looking at the possibility of meeting in the parking lot for midweek services in August and possibly moving that service indoors later depending on what measures are in place. Even then, the indoor gathering would be capped at 50-60.

“Right now were just holding (those plans) very loosely and celebrating our small groups (as an option),” he said. “We don’t know what happens next.”

August also is when La Grande Church of the Nazarene may resume indoor services, pastor Kevin

Goss said. The church has been meeting online since the pandemic started with the exception of a two-week period back in its building before the June outbreak.

Goss said the move from 250 back down to 100 for maximum capacity won’t be a drastic shift for the Nazarene church.

“It really doesn’t change much for us. Our space continues to hold with the distancing,” he said. “We were under 100 the two weeks we were open.”

Brown also Wednesday said visitations could begin at long-term care facilities as long as they were done outdoors.

Melody Johnson, executive director at Grande Ronde Retirement Residence, La Grande, said the Oregon Department of Human Services already put that move in place.

“We’ve already implemented it,” Johnson said. “We have our front patio on our assisted side marked off for social distancing. We have rules they have to follow by. She actually implemented this through DHS a week or two ago. We started it

last week.”

The visitations are by appointment only, and each visitor is screened for COVID-19, Johnson said. The facility also has an outdoor sink where it is requiring visitors wash. Grande Ronde Retirement also requires people wear masks on its campus.

“The appointment scheduling is to minimize flow of foot traffic and allow greater control over the number of visitors,” she said, adding there is a limit of two visitors per resident.

Residents have received the move with joy.

“They haven’t been able to sit and interact with their families in any way (in person),” Johnson said. “We’ve had tears. Just lots of happiness.”

Grande Ronde Retirement also set up a “hug glove” where families could hug through plastic.

“We are definitely happy about it for sure,” Johnson said. “Glad that they get to see their families. You need love in your life. You need touch and you need to see your loved ones. Having that back is pretty phenomenal.”

GYMS

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“We’ll be back at it,” he said.

Larry Glaze of La Grande works out at Grande Ronde Fitness Club and is among those who plans to do his indoor exercise sessions with a mask on.

“It will be harder, but it is doable,” said Glaze, who has been working out on treadmills and stationary bikes for years.

Cory Sudbrock, the facility manager at Grande Ronde Fitness, said until now his club had been asking members to wear masks when exercising except when doing intense workouts that make people breathe hard.

Sudbrock said members have been cooperative and understanding. Sudbrock said one reason is many club members have a heightened awareness of the danger COVID-19 poses because

it recently claimed the life of the granddaughter of Wayne Simonis, the owner of Grande Ronde Fitness.

Samantha Hickey, 45, of Caldwell, Idaho, died July 13 after contracting COVID-19. Hickey was a pediatric nurse practitioner in Caldwell and worked at Grande Ronde Fitness about 20 years ago, and many members remember her.

“It hit close to home. It made people more mindful,” Sudbrock said.

The Grande Ronde Fitness facilities manager is encouraging people working out at the club to be careful when doing hard workouts because of the mask requirement.

“Listen to your body,” he said. “Dial things back if you get light headed.”

At Mountain Valley Fitness & Health, La Grande, executive director Shayla Hewitt said she is worried the mask order will discourage people from working out during the

pandemic. She noted after Brown issued the change, a number of people put appointments with their personal trainers on hold.

Ian McLean, a personal trainer at Mountain Valley, said someone wearing a mask who is not exercising will have the same oxygen level in their blood as when they do not have one on. But this changes, he said, when someone starts doing hard exercise.

McLean said face shields should be considered an option for face masks when exercising because they provide good air flow.

At Anytime Fitness in La Grande, members also have to wear a mask at all times.

Lynette Williamson, a manager at Anytime Fitness, whose center is always open to members, said staff will enforce the mask rule when they are on site and working, which is from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. weekdays and from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturdays.

FUNDS

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about \$200 million of the money for targeted funding to aid Black Oregonians, small businesses, arts groups, and workers who are unemployed.

The allocation was made July 14.

“The Legislature took significant additional steps to assist vulnerable Oregonians whose lives have been turned upside down over the last few months,” said House Speaker Tina Kotek, D-Portland.

Under the federal

ONLINE

• To read the fuller version of this article, as well as a list of coalition members, go to www.lagrandeobserver.com

funding formula, local governments with populations above 500,000 received the money directly. In Oregon, only three local governments qualified: Portland received \$114 million, Washington County received \$105 million and Multnomah County received \$28 million.

Under federal guidelines, 45% of the nearly \$1.4 billion remaining money — \$624 million — should go directly to

local governments on a per capita basis.

“It is more administratively feasible to rely on states, rather than the federal government, to manage the transfer of funds to smaller local governments,” said the guidance from the Treasury Department. “The remaining money should be allocated on a per capita basis. This approach will ensure equitable treatment among local governments of all sizes.”

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