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State sees 'glimmer of hope' on virus



Staff photo by Phil Wright
Signs on the door to Interpath Laboratory in La Grande advise clients of social distancing guidelines and other requirements due to the coronavirus.

By Gary Warner
Oregon Capital Bureau

SALEM — On a day when the one-day death toll from COVID-19 set a new record, Oregon health officials also said some long-range forecasting offers a “glimmer of hope” that the rise in infections could be ebbing.

“These projections show that we’re at a real turning point,” said Dr. Dean Sidelinger, the state’s top infectious disease expert. “We can start to see infections drop again if we reduce transmission.”

The “cautious optimism” came on a day that the Oregon Health Authority also issued some stark new figures.

Oregon reported nine deaths Friday — a new one-day record. Deschutes County and Umatilla County each had two deaths. The state’s death toll is 289. The 28 deaths in the past week account for just under 10% of the total since the first death, later identified as Portland dancer Lynn Bryan, 70, who died on March 14.

Sidelinger said that deaths lag behind reports of infections and hospitalizations and the spike in cases on and immediately after the July 4 holiday means the daily death toll is likely to climb higher.

OHA also reported 340 new cases of COVID-19 Monday, bringing the total since the first case appeared Feb. 28 to more than 17,000.

The percentage of tests that

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Observer file photo

La Grande’s Greenwood Elementary School kindergarten teacher Kendra Carman uses examples of money in class in February 2020 to teach math to a small group of students. Teachers will have a more difficult time with this kind of close-up and hands-on teaching when schools reopen in the fall due to coronavirus restrictions.

MASK RULES AT SCHOOL

Some districts had other plans for reopening

By Sabrina Thompson
The Observer

UNION COUNTY — School districts across Union County were finalizing their reopening plans when Gov. Kate Brown announced new guidelines last week for gatherings and mask requirements. Districts are working to reconfigure their plans, particularly to meet the requirement that children ages 5 and older must wear a mask.

La Grande School District Superintendent George Mendoza said the goal has been to have students back in the classrooms as

often and as safely as possible. To do that, the district is considering stable cohort models for kindergarten through sixth grade, which means classes will remain in the same group all day rather than mixing with other classes.

Jill McKinley has four children enrolled in La Grande’s schools and said her concern is for young children who could have a hard time learning



Staff photo by Sabrina Thompson

La Grande High School is reformatting its class schedule to follow Gov. Kate Brown’s guidelines, which requires students to wear masks. The county’s school districts are reevaluating their reopening plans to meet the latest requirements.

sounds and words from a teacher who is wearing a mask.

“You have to see your teacher’s mouth move to learn sounds, and for them not to see their teacher’s mouth and have it be authentic, I think it

would be really detrimental,” McKinley said. “I understand why we are doing what we are doing, but education wise I am concerned for those little guys.”

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COVID-19 Union County reports no new cases

The Observer

LA GRANDE — Union County has no new reported cases of COVID-19 for the sixth day in a row, according to the latest update Monday from the Center for Human Development. The overall number of cases remains at 385.

The county last reported cases July 21, when it added two to the total. In eight of the last nine days, no cases have been reported. On July 18, four cases came in.

The county remains at 46 reported recoveries from COVID-19 and two deaths attributed to the virus. The number of recoveries likely is higher as the Oregon Health Authority has not been actively calling patients for the last two weeks as the state’s numbers increased.

In the last three weeks, Union County has added a total of 29 cases, an average of 1.38 per day, and in that time has had 10 days without any reported cases. The county’s positive test rate continues to decrease and is at 13.47% (352 positives, 2,261 negatives).

OHA Friday stated that some of its models were showing the possibility of a slowing of the rise in COVID-19 cases statewide. In four of the last eight days, the state has reported fewer than 300 new cases — it reported 340 on Monday — moving the seven-day average to 331.

Overall in Oregon, there have been 17,088 confirmed or presumptive cases of COVID-19 and 289 deaths. July 16 was when Oregon saw its peak, with 437 cases. Statewide, the positive rate continues to increase and is at 4.25% (16,240 positives, 365,478 negatives).

OHA’s weekly testing report showed a decrease in positive tests week over week for the first time in two months. Tests during

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Coming full circle

Dressage rider returns to La Grande after remarkable journey

By Dick Mason
The Observer

LA GRANDE — Michelle Brady, an accomplished dressage rider and trainer, is back in her hometown after eight years of getting an inside look at her sport at its best.

Brady, a 2009 La Grande High School graduate, competed successfully in U.S. Dressage Federation shows, trained up to eight horses a day, traveled to Europe four times and worked for and studied under one of the sport’s best, Catherine Haddad Staller,

in Califon, New Jersey, and Wellington, Florida.

Brady won a top honor during her eight-year sojourn — a gold medal from the U.S. Dressage Federation in 2017. This prize is awarded to riders who meet or exceed a gold medal standard score at an organization-sanctioned competition.

Dressage is the art of riding and training a horse in a manner that develops obedience, flexibility and balance. Successful dressage riders make those watching believe they have achieved a perfect partnership with their horse.

“It appears that the rider is dancing in harmony with the horse,” Brady said. “There is synchrony between the horse and the rider, it is like they are reading

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Photo contributed by Michelle Brady

Michelle Brady of La Grande rides Romanesque earlier this year at Ludlum Farms in Palm City, Florida, during an open training day that showcases horses to potential buyers.

LEARN MORE

Michelle Brady is eager to share what she has learned about dressage over the past eight years and will be conducting clinics in Oregon and Washington beginning in August. At her clinics Brady will assess individual riders and their horses. Information on her clinics is available via email at haeferdressageinc@gmail.com.

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WEATHER

Full forecast on the back of B section



Tonight
60 LOW
Partly cloudy



Wednesday
95/59
Mostly cloudy

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Email story ideas to news@lagrandeobserver.com.
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THURSDAY CENSUS UPDATE

Online at lagrandeobserver.com