

State pushes limits on holiday events

Oregon health officials: ‘Please rethink your Labor Day plans’

By Courtney Vaughn
Oregon Capital Bureau

SALEM — Oregon’s COVID-19 case rate seems to be in decline, but state health officials are nervous about a potential uptick in cases following the upcoming Labor Day holiday weekend.

Noting separate outbreaks tied to a 10-person family get-together earlier this summer, and a weekend at the beach where 20 people gathered, the state’s top health officials cautioned that outbreaks happened when people were infectious, but asymptomatic.

“As we head into the upcoming Labor Day holiday, I want to caution people to strongly rethink your celebrations,” Patrick Allen, director of the Oregon Health Authority, said Thursday. “Limit your social gatherings outside your household. The governor has made indoor social gatherings of more than 10 people off limits.

“Wear a face covering outside or indoors when you can’t maintain 6 feet of physical distance. If you have a small gathering, consider hosting it outdoors, rather than indoors and, of course, wash your hands frequently.”

Allen and Oregon Public Health Director Dr. Dean Sidelinger said last week was the third consecutive week the state saw a decline in cases, but Oregon isn’t out of the woods yet.

Allen said Oregon’s positive test rate fell from 5.4% to 5.1% last week.

“Hospitalizations offer further encouragement,” Allen noted. “Since Aug. 14, we’ve seen a 41% decrease in currently hospitalized COVID-19 patients from 167 to 118.” Allen cautioned that OHA still needs to confirm the trend with additional data.

“We’re headed in the right direction, but we need to keep the pressure on to further slow the spread of the virus,” he added.

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Staff photo by Dick Mason

La Grande Middle School School social studies teacher Anne Marie Fritz on Thursday, Aug. 27, explains some of the virtual tools students will use this fall term during online education. La Grande School District begins the academic year Monday, Aug. 31, with its new and improved virtual Comprehensive Distance Learning program.

A VIRTUAL START

La Grande teachers anticipate unusual September

By Dick Mason
The Observer

LA GRANDE — Three months can make a world of difference.

School begins in the La Grande School District on Monday, Aug. 31, and its teachers will again be providing only virtual instruction to its students, just as they were doing at the end of the 2019-20 school year.

But the quality of the distance education program the district will be providing this fall — Comprehensive Distance Learning, or CDL — will be significantly better, according to La Grande teachers, especially in terms of the live instruction and opportunities for teacher-to-student and student-to-student interaction it will provide.

This has faculty such as La Grande Middle School social studies teacher Anne Marie Fritz excited. She is looking forward to the chance to see and communicate directly with her students and for them to have the chance to get reacquainted with their classmates.

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What they said:

“Students will be able to be reunited with their friends. Classes will be building relationships.”

— Anne Marie Fritz, La Grande Middle School School social studies teacher

“All of the students I’ve talked to wish they could be back in the classroom.”

— John Lamoreau, La Grande High School social studies teacher

“I’m excited and terrified. I have so much to learn, and I’m afraid I will let students and parents down.”

— Pat Des Jardin, La Grande High School science teacher

Firefighting crews rescue newborn Charolais calf

By Jayson Jacoby
EO Media Group

BAKER CITY — The Indian Creek Fire scorched grass that would have fattened the Charolais cattle that Jeff Romans’ family owns, but Romans was still thankful about one aspect of the blaze.

Its timing.

Had the fire started not on Sunday, Aug. 16, but a week or so later, Romans, whose family’s ranch is at Westfall, about 50 air miles south of Baker City, would have had a much bigger problem.

More than a hundred newborn calves likely would have been in the path of the fire, Romans said, and possibly unable to flee the flames.

Some of the Romans family’s purebred Charolais deliver their calves in late winter and early spring, as is typical in the region, but part of the herd is bred to calve in late summer.

And that’s the part of the herd — about

Just The Facts

•The Indian Creek Fire about 50 air miles south of Baker City started Aug. 16 and threatened more than 100 newborn Charolais cattle on grazing on a Bureau of Land Management allotment. The fire has burned across more than 48,000 acres as of Friday, Aug. 28, according to the Incident Information System, involves 381 personnel and is 65% contained.

175 cows — that was grazing on a Bureau of Land Management allotment when the Indian Creek Fire started late on the morning of Aug. 16 just north of Highway 20 between Juntura and Vale. That’s about 30 miles southwest of the Romans Ranch.

Westfall is an unincorporated town

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Photo contributed by Jeff Romans

Mollie Romans with the calf from her family’s Charolais herd that was rescued from the Indian Creek fire in Malheur County on Aug. 22, 2020.

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WEATHER

Full forecast on the back of B section



Tonight
45 LOW
Clear



Sunday
73/48
Cooler

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