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TUESDAY • December 1, 2020 • \$1.50 Good day to our valued subscriber Charles Flick of La Grande

One of every 375 Oregonians over 80 has died with COVID-19

Editor's Note: This article was originally published by The Oregonian/OregonLive, one of more than a dozen news organizations throughout the state sharing their coverage of the novel coronavirus outbreak to help inform Oregonians about this evolving health issue.

By Andrew Theen
The Oregonian/OregonLive

SALEM — When COVID-19 first hit Oregon and long-term care facilities banned visitors, Linda Bennett felt fortunate because she was already right where she'd been her whole life: at mom's side.

Bennett, 65, worked at the care center in Beaverton where her mother, Hope Allison, lived. That job provided inside access to her mom as other families across the state were shut off from visiting loved ones.

It was a lifeline for both women, who were inordinately close.

Bennett was born prematurely, the first child to a teenage mom. She affectionately called herself mom's "mini-me," and for years constructed her work and home life so she'd always be nearby — most recently securing a spot for her mom at the Catholic care facility where she worked.

When Allison, a social butterfly who lived for putting smiles on friends' faces, couldn't leave her room due to COVID-19 restrictions, Bennett walked in with coloring supplies. "That gave her something to live for," Bennett said of her mom's COVID art gallery.

But COVID-19 eventually came to the Maryville care facility in August.

Bennett started working from home to protect her own health. A month later, Allison tested positive for COVID-19.

Bennett never got to see her mom again. Hope Allison, 82, died at Providence St. Vincent Medical Center on Oct. 13.

Allison is part of the age group disproportionately dying from COVID-19 in Oregon and beyond. Oregonians age 80 and older account for more than half of all coronavirus deaths, state statistics show, facing a fatality rate of 18% among the elderly identified with the virus.

All told, 1 out of every 375 Oregonians in that age group has

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Focus on housing



The Observer, File

The Blue Springs Crossing Apartments in Island City in October 2017 received the National Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials' Award of Excellence. The developers are in the process of building a similar complex in east La Grande, which would be completed in 2022.

Apartment project in works for LG

By Dick Mason
The Observer

LA GRANDE — The construction of a proposed \$23.7 million, 104-unit housing complex for low-income residents could begin in east La Grande in the spring.

A plan for the building of the complex, which would be named Timber Ridge Apartments, is set to be submitted to the city of La Grande Planning Department for approval in one to two weeks, said Dale Inslee, executive director of the Northeast Oregon Housing Authority, which will own the apartments.

Should the planning department grant approval and issue building permits, construction could start as early as April 2021 and be completed a year later, according to Daniel Steffey of Community Development Partners, a Portland firm that would be the developer of Timber Ridge Apartments.

The Northeast Oregon Housing Authority apartment complex would be on 4.79 acres on East Q Avenue between 26th and 27th

TIMBER RIDGE APARTMENTS

- \$23.7 million, 104-unit housing complex for low-income residents.
- 36 one-bedroom, 32 two-bedroom, 32 three-bedroom and four four-bedroom apartments.
- Community Development Partners would develop the property, and Northeast Oregon Housing Authority would be the owner.
- Would be similar to the Blue Springs Crossing Apartments in Island City.

streets. The project's general contractor would be CB Construction of La Grande and its architect would be Ink: Built Design of Portland, Steffey said.

The Timber Ridge complex would have 36 one-bedroom, 32 two-bedroom, 32 three-bedroom and four four-bedroom apartments. It also would have a large community building.

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La Grande City Council to discuss housing needs

Council on Wednesday also will discuss COVID-19 relief for businesses

By Kaleb Lay
The Observer

LA GRANDE — La Grande needs almost 800 dwellings over the next 20 years, according to the city's 2019 Housing Needs Analysis. The city council is holding a public hearing on an ordinance regarding the report when it meets Wednesday, Dec. 2.

The analysis was finalized in June 2019 and forecasted a need for the addition housing with the majority of those dwellings being rentals.

"It's actually a two-part process," said Mike Boquist, community development director for La Grande. "The first part is to identify what your housing needs are city-wide over the next 20 years, and then the second part, which we're actually doing right now, is look at strategies (to) solve the housing crisis."

The analysis also predicted a need for more affordable housing in the form of market-rate rentals, duplexes, townhouses, cottage homes and manufactured dwellings, and that La Grande's population would grow by nearly 1,400 people over the next two decades.

The analysis found roughly one in four La Grande households are under a severe rent burden, meaning they spend more than 50% of their income on housing, and more than half are low-income households making less than 80% of median income for Union County, which already ranks below the average median income statewide.

"The city of La Grande was identified by the state as having a high rent burden,"

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Union County's COVID-19 cases climb

The virus case count surged 58% in November, claimed four lives Thanksgiving week

By Kaleb Lay
The Observer

UNION COUNTY — The upward trend in the number of cases in the state of Oregon that began in early November has not relented. And Union County, which had not seen a coronavirus-related death in months, saw three lives lost to the virus in the days leading up to Thanksgiving, Thursday, Nov. 26, and one more on Saturday.

The county death toll now stands at six.

Of the four people in Union County who lost their lives last week, all were in their late 80s or older. Some had underlying conditions, according to the Oregon Health Authority.

Union County's caseload continued to rise over the weekend, though in smaller increments than during the preceding week. The county's public health apparatus, the Center for Human Development, reported eight new cases on Saturday, three on Sunday and six on Monday, bringing the local total for the



Kaleb Lay/The Observer

A face mask sits in a pile of leaves Monday, Nov. 30, 2020, in La Grande. Masks, which have become as vital a part of life in 2020 as they have a point of contention, also have become a common sight in the places where refuse accrues. One would hope it's a sign of compliance with Oregon's public safety mandates. Union County saw a nearly 60% rise in COVID-19 cases into the final days of November.

course of the pandemic to 788.

CHD repeatedly has warned that Union County's cases are, in large part, attributable to untraceable community spread,

stating in press releases "many people who test positive are not sure how or where they became infected. Because of this, taking precautions to protect your-

BY THE NUMBERS

- Union County cases by ZIP code
- La Grande, 97850: 580 cases, or 3,420.8 cases per 100,000
 - Union, 97883: 32 cases, or 1,294 cases per 100,000
 - Cove, 97824: 21 cases, or 1,264.3 cases per 100,000
 - Elgin, 97827: 30 cases, or 1,141.6 cases per 100,000

ONLINE

- To read the Oregon Health Authority's weekly report, see this article at lagrandeobserver.com.

self and reduce the spread of COVID-19 are vital."

Union County saw a nearly 59.8% rise in cases in November, shy of Oregon's statewide growth of roughly 65%. The state added 29,199 cases from Nov. 1-29, whereas it had seen a total of 44,921 in the eight previous months.

Oregon as a whole recorded 3,268 cases on Saturday and Sunday, a two-day record.

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WEATHER Full forecast on the back of B section

Tonight
19 LOW
Clear and colder

Wednesday
38/22
Mostly sunny

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Issue 143
2 sections, 14 pages
La Grande, Oregon

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