State news in brief

Humane Society gets 250 guinea pigs from overwhelmed owner

PORTLAND — The Oregon Humane Society in Portland has taken in 250 guinea pigs from an overwhelmed pet owner.

It's not known exactly how the unidentified person in Lane County became inundated with the furry little rodents, Oregon Public Broadcasting reported. But experts say it can be difficult to determine a guinea pig's gender — and they're best kept in pairs -— because they keep each other company.

Oregon Humane Society spokesperson Laura Klink said an adoption timeline will be determined in the next several days.

"We certainly would love to see some of these guys go home in pairs, whether it's two males or females. But obviously, we're going to be giving a lot of counseling on how quickly they can reproduce if you've got a male and a female together," Klink said.

The Oregon Humane Society's Cat and Kitten Intake Center has been closed because of the coronavirus pandemic, so it could accommodate all of the guinea pigs. Because there are so many, the society also is working with the Greenhill Humane Society and Lane County Animal Services in Eugene.

There will be a special process for people hoping to adopt the guinea pigs and officials said its small-animal specialists will work with potential adopters to ensure a good fit.

State's relief fund for Black Oregonians suspends operations

PORTLAND — The state's new $62 million relief fund for Black Oregonians will stop allocating grants and deposit the remaining $8.8 million with a federal court while legal challenges against it continue.

The Oregon Cares Fund agreed to deposit its money with the court Thursday, Dec. 17, after plaintiffs challenging the fund's constitutionality, The Oregonian/OregonLive reported.

Plaintiffs also asked U.S. Judge Karin Immergut to issue a preliminary injunction or restraining order to stop the fund from distributing money on the basis of race.

Immergut had previously denied two requests for an injunction. In those instances, the Oregon Cares Fund set aside money for the plaintiffs in case they prevailed in their legal challenges, leading Immergut to find that they couldn't show the irreparable harm needed to warrant an injunction.

But the original plaintiff in the case, John Day logging company, Great Northern Resources, joined with Salem electrical contractor Dynamic Service Fire and Security and its owner, Walter Van Leja, to seek class-action status for the suit earlier in December. They then filed a new motion for a preliminary injunction against the Oregon Cares Fund on behalf of themselves and others in their situation.

Oregon Cares Fund offered to deposit its remaining $8.8 million with the court, effectively shutting it down, at least for now.

Lawyers for The Contingent, a nonprofit administering the Oregon Cares Fund, said Thursday that about 7,000 applications for grants from the fund remained pending. Those applications are on hold.

Observers have said it is unlikely that legal challenges would force Black Oregonians who received assistance to repay the money, even if the fund and its supporters lose in court.

Gov. Kate Brown and Attorney General Ellen Rosenblum have issued a joint statement backing the fund and promising to defend it.

Officials: No sign of hack affecting cities in Oregon

SALEM — Amid a newly discovered hack of U.S. government agencies, city officials have been monitoring the situation in Oregon but so far, no intrusions have been detected.

"We just did a statewide call this morning in which this was a topic," said Mike Cully, executive director of the League of Oregon Cities. "There have been no cities — that we are aware of — that have been directly affected."

On the state level, officials are also on the watch for any hacks.

"We are actively monitoring the situation with a broad team of cybersecurity professionals, federal partners, and third-party security specialists," said Charles Boyle, spokesperson for Gov. Kate Brown.

The U.S. Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency, or CISA, invited officials in the state to participate in a call Friday , Dec. 18, to update them on the exploitation of a vulnerability in SolarWinds Orion Platform software versions released between March through June of this year.

No county governments have reported intrusions to the Association of Oregon Counties, according to Rob Bovett, the group's lawyer and legislative director.

The attack on federal agencies, think tanks, nongovernmental organizations and IT companies happened after cyber spies injected malicious code into the software of a company that provides network services.

Experts believe Russia carried out the cyber attack.

More charges in I-5 shooting case

ROSEBURG — The former UPS driver from Roseburg, who was arrested in August on suspicion of shooting at cars on Interstate 5 is facing additional charges.

The News-Review reported Kenneth Alan Ayers, 49, received 26 additional charges at an arraignment hearing Thursdy, Dec. 187, in Jackson County Circuit Court.

The grand jury indictment issued Wednesday, Dec.16 listed a total of 34 charges, including three counts of second-degree attempted murder, one count of second-degree assault, eight counts of unlawful use of a weapon and two counts of first-degree criminal mischief, all of which are felonies.

The indictment also included misdemeanor counts of reckless endangerment related to 14 drivers or passengers in the shootings, as well as six counts of second-degree criminal mischief relating to specific vehicle damage.

Defense attorney Paul Moser entered not guilty pleas on each of the new charges. The new charges were brought in relation to shootings in Douglas and Josephine counties, which spanned over seven days.

Police found a .45 caliber gun in the UPS truck Ayers was driving, which was consistent with the firearm used during the shootings, police said. Police said a woman driving down I-5 was struck by a bullet from a .45 caliber gun on Aug. 19. A man was shot at with the same caliber gun on July 9. Neither person had life-threatening injuries as a result of the shooting.

4 men indicted in assault of Black man

SEATTLE — A federal grand jury indicted four men from Idaho, Oregon and Washington state, accusing them of hate crimes and making false statements in the assault of a Black man at a Seattle bar, authorities said Friday, Dec. 18.

An investigation by the FBI and the Snohomish County Sheriff's Office of the incident two years ago at The Rec Room Bar & Grill in Lynnwood prompted the indictment.

Several men tried to take over a Black disc jockey's audio equipment and beat him when he protested, The Seattle Times reported.

The indictment announced by the U.S. Attorney's Office in Seattle names Jason Desimas of Tacoma, Washington; Jason Stanley of Boise, Idaho; Randy Smith of Eugene, Oregon; and Daniel Delbert Dorson of Corvallis, Oregon. It could not be immediately determined if the men had attorneys to comment on their behalf.

The indictment charges each man with three counts of committing a federal hate crime and one count of making false statements to FBI agents. It also charges the defendants with assaulting two other men.

The indictment accuses the defendants of making "racially derogatory comments" while assaulting the disc jockey, who is not named in the indictment. The men caused bodily injury to the disc jockey because of his "actual and perceived race," the indictment says.

Dorson is accused of lying about attending a "Martyr's Day" celebration before the incident and said "he had not owned a jacket associated with white supremacy hate groups," the U.S. Attorney's Office said. "Martyr's Day" commemorates the 1984 death of white supremacist Robert J. Matthews on Whidbey Island, near Lynnwood.

The indictment also claims Stanley lied about being present at the bar and that Smith lied about how he had bloodied his knuckles.

— *The Associated Press*

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