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Good day to our valued subscriber Lory Graham of Union

The Latest

COVID-19 cases decline in local area

The disease, however, claims another life in Union County

By PHIL WRIGHT
The Observer

UNION COUNTY — COVID-19 cases in Union County eased down since Feb. 5, according to data from the Oregon Health Authority. But since then the disease claimed its 19th victim in the county.

Union County's total number of cases of COVID-19 — the disease causes by the novel coronavirus — stood at 1,249 as of Monday, Feb. 15, according to Oregon Health Authority. The OHA also reported the county's most recent fatality was a 77-year-old woman who tested positive on Jan. 22 and died on Feb. 7 at Grande Ronde Hospital, La Grande.

The county had five new cases of COVID-19 on Monday. The county, however, has not had a day of double-digit cases since Friday, Feb. 5, when there were 12. From Feb. 6-15, according to the OHA data, the county has had a total of 37 new cases, or about four a day, including three on Feb. 12, five on Feb. 13 and one Sunday, Feb. 14.

The decline follows the statewide trend of decreasing numbers. The Oregon Health Authority on Sunday reported 184 new cases statewide, bringing Oregon's total number of reported cases to 150,464.

The OHA on Sunday and Monday also reported zero new COVID-19 related deaths in Oregon. The state's death toll remains at 2,137.

Wallowa County last week saw its highest one-day spike in new COVID-19 cases with nine on Tuesday, Feb. 9, which increased the county's total to 127. The county since then has added six more, bringing its total to 133. There have been 56 new cases of COVID-19 in the county — including a fourth fatality — since the start of 2021, and 31 of those cases occurred since Feb. 1.

OHA also reported adding 6,693 new COVID-19 vaccinations to the state immunization registry. Of this total, 3,650 doses were administered Feb. 14 and 3,043 were administered on previous days but were entered into the vaccine registry on Feb. 14.

Cumulative daily totals can take several days to finalize

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The COVID-19 vaccine experience

Father, daughter share their response to injections

By RONALD BOND
Wallowa County Chieftain

ENTERPRISE — Steven Busch wasn't concerned about getting the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine.

Neither was his daughter, Amy Busch, who is a public relations and development director for the Wallowa

Valley Center for Wellness.

Both said they trusted the science that led to the development of the vaccine — Steven Busch so much so that he was among some 3,000 individuals in San Diego who took part in the trials for the vaccine last summer.

Amy, meanwhile, recently received her second shot of the vaccine, given she is a member of the health care field who qualified to get vaccinated under Phase 1A in Oregon.

"The real reason I did it (is because) the only way we are

going to get out of this pandemic is we need people to be vaccinated," Steven Busch, 68, said of why he took part in the trial.

Being part of a trial for a drug in its early stages of testing could be nerve racking for some, but wasn't for Steven Busch.

"I had no fear," he said. "I wasn't worried about it. That's why I wanted to do it."

He learned of San Diego being selected as a trial city last July, and immediately reached out to regional health officials,

offering to take part.

"They needed 3,000 people in the city of San Diego of diverse background (and) ages," said Busch, who added he also has mild hypertension and believed he would be a good candidate. "I didn't hear back for three weeks. They probably (got) inundated. I got called about the third week of August. I went in the following week thinking it was the pre-screening, (but) once they see you they pretty much want you."

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Alex Wittwer/The Observer

A forklift driver removes pallets of food Thursday, Feb. 11, 2021, from a semitrailer that delivered almost 38,000 pounds of goods to the Northeast Oregon Regional Food Bank in La Grande.

Big boost for food bank

Almost 38,000 pounds of food arrived Thursday, Feb. 11

By DICK MASON
The Observer

LA GRANDE — The inventory list is one Audrey Smith may want to frame.

Smith is the manager of the Northeast Oregon Regional Food Bank, and the document details the contents of a shipment of hope — almost 19 tons of food the organization received Thursday, Feb. 11, from The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

"If I had a dream of the perfect delivery pulling up, this would be it," Smith said Thursday as she looked at pallets of food a semitrailer delivered from Salt Lake City, Utah.

The semi had 37,889 pounds of food, including peanut butter, packages of instant mashed potatoes and boxes of macaroni and cheese.

Smith explained she was happy to see many of these items partly because they are ones often asked for but the Oregon Food Bank — which serves the Northeast Oregon Regional Food Bank — has not provided.



Alex Wittwer/The Observer

George Chadwick (left) of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and Northeast Oregon Regional Food Bank manager Audrey Smith look over the inventory list of the food shipment the church delivered Thursday, Feb. 11, 2021.

She noted it has been several months since the Oregon Food Bank sent canned fruit

and boxes of macaroni and cheese. And she said this is the first time she recalls ever having

anything close to this much jam available.

"I have never received pallets of jam before," Smith said.

The amount of peanut butter also is substantial, welcome news because the Oregon Food Bank has been cutting back providing the popular staple.

"There is a peanut butter shortage," Smith said.

The LDS Church shipped the food from its Bishops Central Storehouse in Salt Lake City. Volunteers and church-service missionaries staff the storehouses.

And the church produced much of the food. This included the many pallets of peanut butter, which came from a cannery the church owns and operates in Houston, Texas, said George Chadwick of La Grande. Chadwick is the local leader of the LDS Church in Northeast Oregon.

Chadwick began working on arranging a donation from the church to the Northeast Oregon

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Tonight
30 LOW
Cloudy

Wednesday
37/13
Morning flurries

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2 sections, 14 pages
La Grande, Oregon

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