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THE OBSERVER

Weekend Edition

SATURDAY- MONDAY • February 20, 2021 • \$1.50 Good day to our valued subscriber Anna Brown of La Grande

Umatilla County baby dies with COVID-19

Union County cases creep up; La Grande School District boss urges diligence

By **BRYCE DOLE**
East Oregonian

UMATILLA COUNTY — Oregon's first COVID-19-related death of a child between 0-9 years old has occurred — an infant boy from Umatilla County.

The Oregon Health Authority in a press release on Thursday, Feb. 18, reported the infant boy tested positive for COVID-19 on Jan. 17, and died that same day at Kadlec Regional Medical Center in Richland, Washington. The OHA reported the child had unspecified underlying health conditions.

"Every death from COVID-19 is a tragedy, even more so the death of a child," Dr. Dean Sidelinger, OHA's health officer and state epidemiologist, said in a press release. "The death of an infant is extremely rare. This news represents a tremendous loss to the mother and family. My thoughts are with them during this difficult time."

Children who contract COVID-19 are less likely to develop severe symptoms than adults, but they are still at risk, Sidelinger said. The state encourages all parents with children who test positive and develop certain symptoms to seek emergency medical care.

Those symptoms include troubled breathing, constant pain or pressure in the chest, new feelings of confusion, being unable to wake up or stay awake when not tired and bluish lips or face, OHA said.

"We have all worked together for nearly a year in Oregon to protect the lives of those we hold most dear," said Gov. Kate Brown. "The loss of a life so young is an indescribable tragedy for a family. Dan and I send our thoughts and condolences to the mother and family of this child, whose grief must be unimaginable in this moment. The hearts of all Oregonians are with you today."

Children with certain underlying medical conditions, as well as infants younger than 1 year old, could be at increased risk for developing severe symptoms. Most children who have experienced severe illness from COVID-19 have had underlying medical conditions, according to the

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Alex Wittwer/The Observer

Lou Gerber, 65, poses for a portrait Thursday, Feb. 18, 2021, in front of a wall of former masters of the lodge at the Freemason's Lodge in La Grande. Gerber became a master of the lodge a day before his trip to Rwanda to train local residents on CPR and first aid as well as to deliver medical supplies.

On a medical mission

Reflecting on a service trip not to be forgotten

By **DICK MASON**
The Observer

Rwanda is a medical paradox. The east African nation of 13.1 million has one of the lowest COVID-19 death rates in the world yet the availability of basic medical equipment is limited.

Lou Gerber of La Grande understands this well. The retired Oregon National Guardsman, who served as a medic in Iraq in 2003 and 2004, returned after a two-week trip in December 2020 to Rwanda with his son Matt, who grew up in La Grande but now lives in Dallas, Texas.

Lou Gerber gained a first-hand glimpse of Rwanda's medical system while teaching a CPR and first aid class to 38 first responders and providing them with donated medical supplies. Gerber was jolted to find many medical professionals in Rwanda have no stethoscopes, blood pressure cuffs or pulse oximeters, which measure blood oxygen levels.

"Nurses did not have these," Gerber said. "It was very surprising."

On the other end of the med-



Alex Wittwer/The Observer

Lou Gerber demonstrates how to administer CPR with his set of ACTAR training dummies. Gerber has kept the set for nearly 40 years and has used them to train others in CPR.

ical spectrum, Gerber said Rwanda's government is diligent in its efforts to limit the spread of COVID-19.

"It is very meticulous about protecting the population," Gerber said.

Gerber's son agreed, explaining that people must wear masks at almost all times, even when in vehicles.

"You will get pulled over if

everyone is not wearing a mask," Matt Gerber said.

Rwandans also are screened for COVID-19 many times a day.

"Every time you walk into a bank, a grocery store or a hotel your temperature is taken," Matt Gerber said.

There also are many random checks. Lou Gerber noted he

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Delays have redistricting, bills up against deadlines

With some exceptions, bills that don't make key legislative deadline die automatically

By **GARY WARNER**
Oregon Capital Bureau

SALEM — After a double-dose of winter storms across the Willamette Valley knocked out power to hundreds of thousands from Portland to Salem, state government is trying to thaw out a few hot issues.

Redistricting delay

Oregon should know by April 30 if it will be adding a sixth congressional seat for the 2022 election. Census officials have unofficially said Oregon's population growth has been enough to ensure the state's first new seat in 40 years.

The new added representation in Congress would be a rare piece

of good news in an otherwise disastrous roll-out of U.S. Census information needed for reapportionment. Oregon Legislature's 60 House and 30 Senate seats also will need new boundaries. Data to redraw the maps was due April 1 — but census officials now say it won't arrive until Sept. 30 — six months late.

"The biggest reason? COVID-19. It's something beyond the Census Bureau's control," Kathleen Styles, the census bureau's top redistricting official, said last week.

State officials need the data to draw districts that meets federal and state civil rights guidelines.

The late September delivery date is 45 days after Oregon's



EO Media Group, File

In an effort to "preserve public access" to the Oregon Legislature, the House Republican leader urged the House Speaker Tuesday, Feb. 16, 2021, to pause the virtual 2021 session during mass power outages across the state. Friday, Feb. 19, was the deadline for drafted bills to be sent from staff to lawmakers.

self-imposed deadline for submitting maps. The mess will land in the Oregon Supreme Court, which will referee whether the Legislature gets a shot at reapportionment, it goes to the secretary of state or some other result.

Big population increases over the past decade will add legislative districts to Central Oregon and Portland suburbs. Lawmakers and potential challengers won't

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WEATHER Full forecast on the back of B section

Tonight 30 LOW Some clouds
Sunday 41/33 Rain and snow

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TUESDAY SHERIFF CODY BOWEN

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