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Face mask requirement signs hang in the doorway of Big 5 Sporting Goods, La Grande, on Tuesday, Feb. 8, 2022. The Oregon Health Authority announced on Feb. 7 that beginning March 31, face masks will no longer be required indoors.

Family disputes OHA report

State says Wallowa County woman died from COVID, but family says 'not true'

By RONALD BOND
Wallowa County Chieftain

SALEM — The family of a Wallowa County woman who died in December is disputing an Oregon Health Authority report that COVID-19 had anything to do with her death.

"Definitely not a COVID death," said Josh Barnett, a Salem resident, of his mother, Theresa Malec, a former resident of Wallowa.



Malec

Malec died at Barnett's home in Salem on Dec. 15, 2021, about two weeks after being diagnosed with liver cancer, Barnett said.

Barnett said there was a delay in the processing of her death certificate, and when he received it, he had some suspicion that her death might be called a COVID-19-related death.

On Jan. 27, OHA reported the death of a 70-year-old Wallowa County woman in its daily COVID-19 report. It said the woman died on Dec. 15 after a positive test on Aug. 4.

While OHA does not provide names on its report — and declined to confirm to the Chieftain if the death it reported was indeed Malec — Barnett said it's not too difficult to make the assumption that the death in the report was his mother.

COVID-19, though, was not what killed her, he said, and the death certificate, which he provided to the Chieftain, shows that.

Contracted COVID, but defeated it

Barnett said his mother — who earlier in the year had defeated breast cancer before the unexpected liver cancer diagnosis — did indeed have COVID-19 in early August, but healed up only a couple days after receiving treatment.

"She got ivermectin and the

See, **Death**/Page A5

READY TO DITCH THE MASKS

Local support appears strong for state decision to end mask mandate no later than March 31

By DICK MASON
The Observer

LA GRANDE — Oregonians now know how many more days they'll be required to wear masks in indoor public spaces.

The Oregon Health Authority announced on Monday, Feb. 7, that it will end the requirement masks must be worn in public places indoors no later than March 31. This timeline also applies to mask requirements inside schools. The school mask mandate will be lifted after March 31, according to an OHA press release.

Falling COVID-19 numbers are the reason the OHA is lifting its requirements. By late March, health scientists expect that about 400 or fewer Oregonians would be hospitalized with COVID-19, the level of hospitalizations the state experienced



Celine Vandervlugt, the teen services librarian at Cook Memorial Library, La Grande, laminates a book cover on Tuesday, Feb. 8, 2022. Face masks will not be required indoors in public places after March 31, the Oregon Health Authority announced on Feb. 7.

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Stores: Sales pick up during Super Bowl weekend

Popularity of snack items increases during Super Bowl weekend

By DICK MASON
The Observer

LA GRANDE — The Los Angeles Rams are a 4-1/2 point favorite to beat the Cincinnati Bengals in this weekend's Super Bowl, which means experts believe the outcome of the game is anything but a

certainly.

This much is certain, though — the contest, which starts at 3:30 p.m. Sunday, Feb. 13, in Los Angeles, will again give many grocery stores in Union County a chance to score big. Store owners anticipate being blitzed by waves of customers buying

snacks, soft drinks, beer and condiments as fans prepare for the big game.

"The day before the Super Bowl is crazy. It is our most busy day of the year, even busier than New Year's Eve," said Fred Bell Jr., who owns La Grande's Short Stop Xtreme Froyo and Espresso with his wife, Tara.

Bell said chips, beer and soft drinks are his best-selling items on Super

Bowl weekend.

Randy Willson, who is co-owner of Grocery Outlet, Island City, with his wife, Michelle, said his store annually experiences a boost in sales for the week leading up to the Super Bowl as people stock up for parties.

"We probably see a 20% bump," he said. "It has quite an impact."

Willson compares the boost in sales to what Gro-

cery Outlet experiences on Thanksgiving, the Fourth of July and Memorial Day.

He said sales of chips, chicken wings, soft drinks, beer, dips, beef and items for outdoor barbecue jump during Super Bowl week. To accommodate the added demand, Willson said that an extra truckload of inventory is always ordered for Super Bowl week.

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WEATHER Full forecast on the back of B section

Tonight
27 LOW
Mainly clear

Friday
47/25
Partly sunny

CONTACT US

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La Grande, Oregon

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