

**STATE BRIEFS**

**Person dead after police chase and shooting**

MILWAUKIE — Authorities say a person is dead following a police pursuit and shooting in Milwaukie early Saturday, June 18.

The Clackamas County Sheriff's Office reported on Twitter that the shooting happened shortly before 1 a.m. Deputies and Oregon State Police troopers were involved.

The sheriff's office said the shooting followed an attempted traffic stop and a police chase, but few other details were released. It was not immediately known if the person shot was armed. There were no reports of injuries to officers.

The Clackamas Inter-agency Major Crimes team is investigating in conjunction with the Clackamas County District Attorney's Office. The sheriff's office said further information would be released next week following the completion of an autopsy and additional investigation.

**Man pleads guilty to killing woman, 3-year-old boy**

PORTLAND — An Oregon man has pleaded guilty in the kidnapping and murder of his 3-year-old child and the child's mother.

Michael Wolfe pleaded guilty Friday, June 17, in Yamhill County District Court to aggravated murder and second-degree murder in the 2019 deaths of Karissa and Billy Fretwell, KOIN-TV reported.

Wolfe has been in jail since his May 2019 arrest in the Fretwells' deaths and initially pleaded not guilty to numerous charges.

Karissa and Billy Fretwell's bodies were found in a remote wooded area about 10 miles outside of Yamhill in June 2019. They were reported missing to Salem authorities in mid-May.

Court documents showed Fretwell, 25, and Wolfe had been in a child support battle.

Wolfe's plea on Friday took the death penalty off the table. His sentencing is scheduled for June 20.

**Man accused of threatening to 'shoot up' school**

SHERWOOD — A man is facing a federal charge stemming from what FBI agents said were his emailed messages to federal law enforcement about his desire to kill children at an elementary school in Sherwood.

The Oregonian/OregonLive reports a federal grand jury has indicted Braeden Richard Riess, 26, of Tigard, on one count of interstate communication of threats.

He appeared in federal court Friday, June 17, about a month after he was charged in Washington County Circuit Court with multiple counts of disorderly conduct in the same case. His court-appointed federal public defender entered a not guilty plea to the single federal charge on his behalf.

Riess is accused of sending multiple emails May 15 to the FBI's website threatening to "shoot up" Middleton Elementary School because of the agency's failure to stop "hackers," according to a federal affidavit and Sherwood police.

The FBI had received earlier emails from Riess, but those didn't name a specific target or school, the affidavit said, though they did threaten that Riess would walk into a school and kill innocent children. He sent those emails between May 5 and May 13, according to the affidavit.

FBI agents arrested Riess at his Tigard apartment on May 16.

He has pleaded not guilty to six counts of first-degree disorderly conduct, a misdemeanor, in Washington County Circuit Court.

**'Everybody you know is getting infected'**

**Why Oregon state is awash in unreported COVID-19 infections**

BY FEDOR ZARKHIN  
The Oregonian

PORTLAND — Todd Ouzts let his guard down this week for perhaps the first time in two years and quickly regretted it.

After spending most of the pandemic isolated at home with his wife, Ouzts went to a Home Depot Monday, June 13, maskless, to buy a garage door opener. The 60-year-old semi-retired stop-motion animator had already received four doses of the COVID-19 vaccine and figured he was as prepared as he could be to transition back to a more normal life.

But in a variation of what is now a familiar story, Ouzts had a sore throat and was coughing and sneezing the next day. He originally thought the cause was dust he breathed in his garage while installing the opener. But by the following day, his body hurt and he had a headache. He took an at-home COVID-19 test and found out he was positive for the coronavirus.

While he made the choice to go to the store maskless, Ouzts is now frustrated about what he sees as mixed messages coming from the government about what precautions to take.

"I'm angry that we haven't solved this yet as a society," he said. "No one wants to be inconvenienced with rules anymore."

The Washington County man's experience is becoming increasingly common, as thousands of Oregonians continue to get infected with the virus daily, even as the state and nation appear to be



Brooke Herbert/The Oregonian

Kelly Beckley, R.N., preps vials of the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine to be administered to teachers and educators at The Oregon Convention Center on Jan. 27, 2021, in Portland.

moving on.

COVID-19 infections have increasingly become part of the new normal. Few businesses still require masks or proof of vaccination, and the state's messaging around precautions has been muted when compared to the frequency and volume of warnings during past surges.

Infections appear to be so widespread, even Dr. Anthony Fauci, the country's top infectious disease expert, recently tested positive for COVID-19.

"I think it's a confusing time for people," said Dr. Marcel Curlin, an infectious disease expert with Oregon Health & Science University.

On the one hand, he said, there are clearly a lot of infections. On the other, the state long ago lifted most restrictions meant to curb spread of disease.

"What the heck is going on? Which is it?" Curlin said many people are likely asking themselves.

**'We're not there yet'**

The country is in the transition phase before the coronavirus becomes endemic, or a regular and constant presence in society, Curlin said. That evolution is to be expected, given that evolution favors viruses that spread easily and keep hosts alive so they can pass the virus to others.

But because "we're not there yet," Curlin said, the virus can still cause severe illness, meaning it is worthwhile to take precautions to prevent infection.

As if to underscore the confusion, official reported infection numbers are widely considered to be a profound undercount of the true number of infections. COVID-19 cases are undercounted primarily because of the wide availability of at-home tests that don't have to be reported to the state and because some people with no or mild symptoms might not get tested at all.

Indeed, according to a University of Washington model, the cur-

rent infection surge in Oregon has driven the second-most cases of any wave during the pandemic, behind only the first omicron surge this winter. One wouldn't know that looking at state data, which shows the delta wave peak exceeding the peak of the current surge.

Figuring out the true scope of infections would require surveys that could show approximately what percentage of cases aren't reported, and to then use those results to extrapolate how many cases aren't being reported statewide, experts say.

In the absence of such data, state officials estimate that the true number of infections could be 20 to 30 times higher than the roughly 1,450 cases a day being publicly reported in Oregon.

**Hospitalizations hit peak**

State officials have cautioned the public to remember the pandemic "is not over," and have urged people to consider wearing masks in indoor public places. But they have also repeatedly pointed to a critical difference between the current wave and past waves: severity of disease.

Despite the volume of COVID-19 cases during the current wave, hospitalizations appear to have peaked June 5 at 327 occupied beds — several times less than the hospitalization peaks during the delta wave and the first omicron wave. Reported monthly deaths have also returned to lower levels not seen since July 2021.

But for Oregonians who recently got sick after taking precautions and getting vaccinated and boosted, the low hospitalization numbers offer little consolation.

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