

PANDEMIC continued from 1

risk or bear complications because you're immunocompromised or over 65, and it's been four months since your last bivalent booster, you can get a second bivalent booster."

As of March 10, a *New York Times* tracker shows Oregon suffered 967,156 cases of Covid, and 9,451 deaths. The state's overall vaccination rate is 71%.

Extended health coverage, services, and supports for older adults and people with disabilities are also ending, as is continuous coverage for Medicaid. Oregonians are advised to update their information and status for the Oregon Health Plan, for a "redetermination" process.

State officials praised the response to the pandemic, noting Oregon is among those with lower death rates and higher vaccination rates than many others in the U.S. They said going forward, people will live with the possibility of contacting COVID-19 for years to come but expressed optimism that with diminished rates of cases, hospitalizations, and deaths, that outcomes are much better now than at the onset of the pandemic.

"We anticipate in the fall, we will have updated boosters available, and we'll encourage you to get those along with your flu shot," Sidelinger added.

In a release, the Oregon Health Authority shared other areas that will see changes regarding pandemic protocols:

Exposure, isolation guidance

A five-day period of isolation for those infected with the COVID-19 virus will not be recommended for the general population, including people in K-12 education settings. OHA officials believe widespread population immunity due to vaccination and repeated infections means many COVID-19 infections are now likely asymptomatic or mildly symptomatic, and the five-day isolation period does little to reduce transmission.

Instead, they say, the recommendation for the general population will be to stay home until fever-free for 24 hours and symptoms improve, to avoid contact with individuals at increased risk for severe disease, like older adults or people with underlying medical conditions; and consider masking for 10 days.

School testing

Diagnostic testing resources for students and staff with symptoms or exposure to COVID-19 in schools will remain available through July 31, 2024 – including iHealth self-tests. These will remain available for K-12 schools to request and distribute to their school communities until the stock is depleted. Weekly opt-in "screening" testing for K-12 students and staff without COVID-19 symptoms will end July 31 as funding for the effort wraps up.

Reporting

OHA will change how it monitors COVID-19, epidemiologists will transition to a new model that focuses on gathering transmission data and learning more about severe outcomes, like "long-COVID." OHA officials say the changes mirror how the common cold is monitored.

The endings of the vaccination, isolation and some testing measures are among a spate of impending changes over the coming weeks as Oregon, and the nation, continue the long, careful transition out of the pandemic. A number of "flexibilities" put in place during the pandemic will remain in effect.

The following are among the Covid-era activities and requirements that will continue:

- An extension of a 90-day "reasonable opportunity period" for non-citizens to verify citizenship or immigration status to 180 days so they can enroll in Oregon Health Plan (OHP).
- A requirement that OHP providers, including coordinated care organizations, continue to cover COVID-19 vaccinations and treatment without cost sharing, and that commercial health insurers cover vaccinations without cost sharing. In Oregon, vaccinations are covered no matter where someone gets a shot. Oregonians should contact their health care provider about where they can get vaccinated.
- A requirement that Oregon health care providers be reimbursed for language interpreter services (spoken or signed) provided during an office visit.
- A requirement that OHP providers offer access to telehealth services.

HERITAGE continued from 1

Above, students and families got henna tattoos as one of many cultural activities at the celebration



At left, members of a Hawaiian dance troupe showcased the Hula, and right, the Eugene Bhangra performed in the Guy Lee Elementary School gymnasium last week.

RYLEIGH NORGROVE/
THE CHRONICLE

ment to invest in occasions such as this one.

"I just want the students to learn more about Asia and the Pacific Islands and Native Hawaiian culture," Kruse said. "Our school administrators were awesome and were so supportive from the very beginning."

The event also highlighted the work of the Springfield History Museum's ILLUMINATION exhibit — which featured stories and photographs of six contemporary Springfield community members exploring the Asian American, Pacific Islander and Native Hawaiian (AANHPI) experience in the area. Through interviews, photographs, and personal objects the stories shared "illuminate the intersectionality of our Springfield identity."

Guy Lee Vice Principal Josh Donaldson said the celebration was an informal extension of the school's immersion program.

"We are the dual immersion school for Springfield and one of the goals of that is biculturalism — exposing students to as many cultural experiences is a huge part of that," he said. "The collaboration between PTO and community partners has been unlike anything I've seen."

The family-friendly event featured performances from the Hula Troop, Kumu Akiko Colton and Halau Hula O Na Pua o Hawaii Nei, a Chinese Oboe performance by Brandon Hao, songs by the Eugene-Springfield Korean Central Church and the Eugene-Springfield Chinese Church. Eastgate Kenpo provided a martial arts demonstration and the Eugene Bhangra and Philippine American Association performed some whirling, colorful dances. Eugene Taiko and the Talavou Pacific Arts Academy closed out the jam-packed three hours of song and dance.

Mayor Sean VanGordon spoke to a crowd of onlookers, commemorating the moment.

"This event is about community, about all of us working together to recognize the important work of AAPI people in our community and their impact on the culture and history of our area," he said.

He also read an official proclamation, which declared this month AAPI heritage month in Springfield.

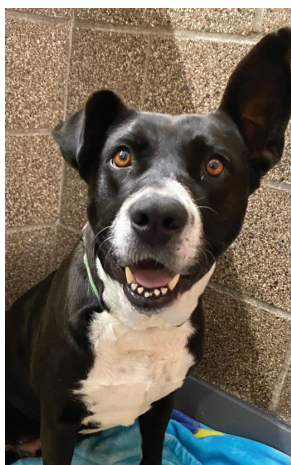
"We are so excited by all of the people here celebrating with us," Kruse said. "What better way to immerse yourself in Springfield's thriving AAPI community than through food, fun, and friends."

PET OF THE WEEK

Meet beautiful Fanny Bananny! She is a mellow young lady who would make the most ideal walking buddy every morning! She enjoys running around with her toys and catching up on some ZZs on a warm comfy couch. Everyone who meets her instantly falls in love with her charming, sweet demeanor and those adorable ears! A volunteer said, "She is so calm and polite, enjoys attention, gentle and a really nice dog."

Fanny Bananny is a 4-year-old mixed breed who is spayed, microchipped, and up to date on vaccines. She weights between 75-80 lbs.

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