



EDWARD STRATTON

Josie Lilly used a layoff during the coronavirus pandemic to go back to school to become an electrician.

stimulus early.

“It’s important that everyone receiving regular UI benefits knows that some requirements were paused or modified during the crisis, like actively looking for work, being available for work, and registering for work in our iMatchSkills system,” David Gerstenfeld, director of the Oregon Employment Department, announced earlier this month. “These requirements are starting back up again, and people will need to meet these requirements by designated dates in order to be eligible to continue receiving benefits.”

Regional workforce analyst Shawna Sykes said workers in low-wage industries are also wary about trying to enforce coronavirus restrictions some visitors don’t want to comply with.

“That confrontational aspect that is really difficult for some people to handle as wait staff or hostesses ... even retail,” she said.

The region falls also falls well short on providing affordable housing and childcare, handicapping people who want to move to the region or even leave home to work. Rents routinely surpass \$1,000 a month for a one-bedroom apartment. Childcare options have dwindled amid the pandemic, even with children forced to stay home from school.

The pressures are leading many to rethink their future in hospitality.

Josie Lilly waitressed on and off for about



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20 years. She was laid off from the Astoria Coffeehouse & Bistro in March 2020 because of pandemic dining restrictions.

“I was kind of trapped at home with my daughter,” Lilly said. “There was no child care. Trying to be my daughter’s playmate 24/7 was a little draining and exhausting. I was kind of anxious to get back doing something.”

Homebound, Lilly started taking courses online toward her dream of becoming an electrician, while caring for her daughter and taking the occasional shift at Columbia Housewarmers when she can find a babysitter.

“I’d definitely been considering it and kind of dipping my toes in the water before,” Lilly said, “but this was the real shove over the cliff.”

Though summer 2020 saw a heavy amount of visitor traffic, Oregon Coast travel spending was down 42.3% from \$2.14 billion in 2019 to \$1.235 billion in 2020, according to research firm Dean Runyan Associates’ report on the economic impact of travel in Oregon.

Employment directly related to travel dipped 22.6% from 2019, with approximately 18,770 jobs in 2020.

Sears said she’s expecting another very busy summer on the coast, and Travel Oregon’s Competitive & Recovery Grant Program is trying to help ensure that will be reflected in visitor spending this year.

Two projects in Clatsop County received funding through the program: the City of Seaside Visitors Bureau got \$14,000 to



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A business advertises that it’s hiring.







outdoor spaces.

Sears said this goes along with the trend of outdoor dining so people can pick up food from restaurants or food trucks and have safe places to eat while watching the waves or the river.

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