

Downtown trick-or-treat events cancelled

■ **Columbia Gorge News**

The trick-or-treat Halloween events in downtown The Dalles and Hood River have both been canceled.

The events, traditionally organized and sponsored by The Dalles Main Street Organization and Hood River Chamber of Commerce, has been canceled in accordance with CDC and OHA recommendations.

However, The Dalles Main Street organization is offering a self-guided “Spookytown” tour of the city.

With cases on the rise in Oregon and face coverings required in indoor and outdoor public spaces statewide, to keep Halloween safe, Hood River authorities caution against trick or treating.

With a spooky season approaching and COVID-19 continuing to circulate, Hood River officials advise county residents to show their Halloween spirit this year by doubling down on dress-up and decoration and reducing their risk of exposure by avoiding trick-or-treating, haunted houses or large gatherings.

The Hood River event gathers annually on Oak Street

in downtown Hood River to offer local trick or treaters a safe option to stock their candy reserves.

The statewide moratorium on large events and gatherings issued by Governor Kate Brown has not been lifted in time to move forward with the 2020 Hood River Downtown Safe Halloween event. The Oregon Health Authority is recommending that Oregonians avoid traditional door-to-door trick or treating and “Trunk or Treat” events because they are high risk activities for crowding among people outside your household. This recommendation aligns with the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), which also recommends families avoid traditional trick or treating.

“We are eager for the return of community celebrations and eager for the return of the Hood River Safe Halloween event, but are at a critical crossroads and must make a plea to residents that they have a moral and social responsibility to continue to practice compliance, vigilance, and an abundance of caution in our community,” said Mike Matthews, Hood River County Environmental

Health. “We, as a community, want to maintain a safe environment for our children to celebrate and so recommend celebrating within your family homes and in alternative ways.”

“Downtown businesses look forward to seeing trick or treaters in the future and empathize with the disappointment this may bring to local kids. They encourage children and adults alike to dress up all month long when shopping and dining downtown,” said Ashley Huckaby May, interim director for Visit Hood River/ Hood River County Chamber of Commerce.

‘**Spooky Town’ Tours**

Visitors and residents are encouraged “to brave the Downtown streets of The Dalles for spine-chilling stories of murder, mayhem and ghosts ... along with a few light-hearted tales of the weird and wonderful,” according to the Main Street Program’s website.

The tour is a fundraiser for the Main Street Program, a local nonprofit invested in restoring historic Downtown and helping businesses

achieve sustainability and success. To ensure safe social distancing, the event is a self-guided tour based on a map provided by donation.

“Our tour guides have prepared a series of videos that, once you scan the strategically placed QR codes, will open to tell tale of the haunted and hilarious from The Dalles history. Historic photos, newspaper articles and sounds will bring history to life right on your personal device,” organizers said.

You will need a smartphone or smart device to participate and a good set of headphones is recommended. While there are some free wifi hotspots downtown, you may also need a data plan.

A shorter, family-friendly tour features PG rated stories. The adult tour is longer, with stories that include murder, houses of ill repute and other mature content.

A \$10 donation for purchase of a tour map is requested for the family-friendly tour, and \$12 for the adult tour.

Tours went live on Oct. 9. Payment information and details can be found at on their website, thedallesmainstreet.org/spooky-town-2020.

Curious how this works? Test it out with a free video about the history of Halloween in The Dalles — simply point your smartphone’s QR code reader at the QR code below and tap to follow the link.



Safety tips

As Halloween approaches, follow these tips for safe and fun ways to celebrate the holiday with your household. COVID-19 cases have increased around holiday gatherings including Memorial Day, Independence Day and Labor Day. “This Halloween, be extra mindful of your choices and choose low-risk activities,” said a press release.

Oregon Health Authority (OHA) is recommending that

Oregonians avoid traditional door-to-door trick or treating.

Below are a list of low-risk activities:

Visit an outdoor pumpkin patch. Remember to wear a mask if you cannot maintain physical distance and avoid crowded activities like hayrides.

■ Attend an online costume contest with friends.

■ Watch a scary movie with your household.

■ Carve pumpkins with people in your household.

■ Decorate your home with spooky décor.

■ Drive around your neighborhood to look at decorated houses with your household.

“If you dress up in a costume, be careful to plan a costume that allows you to wear a face covering,” said State Health Officer Dr. Dean Sidelinger. “Halloween masks will not protect you or others from coronavirus. Wearing a cloth or disposable face mask that fits snugly and covers your mouth and nose is still required while wearing a costume, no matter how scary or silly your costume is.”

CRISIS Staff accounts tell different story

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Now that all residents have been transferred out of the facility, the Memory Care Unit will be professionally cleaned and disinfected.

“We needed it to sit 48 hours vacant, nobody in or out, and then we are professionally cleaning it today (Monday, Oct. 12) ... and then we’ll go from there,” said Caryl Ridgeway, chief operations officer for Milestone.

ODHS issued an executive order for Flagstone Retirement and Assisted Living on Sept. 14, and issued a second executive order specific to the Memory Care Unit on Sept. 22 — meaning that Flagstone would need to comply with additional infection control requirements, such as posting signs, taking measures to separate infected residents from uninfected residents, and retraining staff on infection control. Additionally, Aging and People with Disabilities staff would begin weekly on-site reviews of facilities and provide additional oversight at the facility.

Staff voice concerns

Staff and residents were tested weekly for COVID-19, and any employee who tested positive was sent home on a mandatory 14-day quarantine. In total, 15 staff members were put on mandatory quarantine — and though these were not all during the same week, the remaining staff severely felt the absence of their colleagues.

Multiple employees who worked during the first days of the Flagstone outbreak have publicly spoken out about negative conditions they experienced at Flagstone, primarily as a result of being overworked and understaffed to the point where residents suffered from neglect, despite local staff’s best efforts to keep up with residents’ needs.

Employees also expressed frustration about corporate’s response and a lack of clear communication from the corporate level, and they

said that when they voiced concerns about management of the outbreak, they were either ignored or directly retaliated against.

One employee, who asked to remain anonymous, said that she got a panicked phone call from former-Executive Director Sharla Mosqueda the evening of Sunday, Sept. 20, telling her that her COVID-19 test had come back negative and asking her to come into work the next day.

“The 21st, 22nd and 23rd of September were probably the worst three days of my life that I have had so far,” she said, describing 14- to 16-hour days doing her regular work as a medical technician on the Assisted Living side of Flagstone while also doing jobs outside her regular duties, such as answering call lights and helping to bring meals down to Memory Care. Other coworkers worked up to 36 hours straight, and drove to a colleague’s house down the street to shower because they didn’t have time to go home on their breaks.

“I was like, whoa, I have slept like maybe six hours in the last week. Yeah, I have nothing left to give. I am hearing people screaming, I’m hearing people that are struggling to breathe ... I just, I need therapy after this.”

Despite the rest of her workload, she was put in charge of caring for the one resident in the Memory Care Unit who hadn’t tested positive for COVID-19. The woman was “locked up by herself,” she said, with a wall of plastic between her, her apartment, and an apartment that’s located directly across the hall.

“She literally told me, ‘I don’t know when was the last time that I ate’ ... that, out of everything, strikes a nerve with me the most,” she said.

That apartment across the hall had been housed by a COVID-positive resident, who was among of the first seven residents to be transferred out go the Memory Care Unit. However, between the time when the COVID-positive resident was transferred and staff got around to cleaning the room of contaminants, someone left the apartment door open.

“This woman, for days

and days and days, had the opportunity, being left alone, not having her medications, she had the opportunity to go into that apartment and do whatever she wanted ...” in a room that still had many of the other resident’s possessions, along with COVID-contaminated linens, clothing, and soiled bed pads. “It was just sitting there to be rifled through by a (COVID) negative resident.”

That last resident eventually tested positive for COVID-19.

“I just want to do everything that I can to make sure that my grandma doesn’t get put in that situation, that my wife’s grandma doesn’t get put in that situation, that your grandma doesn’t get put in that situation. It’s just, it’s wrong.”

When she did speak out to her supervisors, she said her concerns were ignored, and eventually, she was removed from the work schedule and placed on a mandatory quarantine for entering the Memory Care Unit. She said she does not expect that she’ll be allowed back to work after her quarantine ends.

Corporate’s response

When asked to respond to employees’ reports of potential negligence at the facility during the outbreak, Ridgeway responded, “The state has been there, and they would have made Roz (Watson) or I aware immediately if there was something that was concerning to them regarding neglect of a resident.”

Referring specifically to former Flagstone staff member Scott Scrimshaw’s account of the “crisis” in the Memory Care Unit, published in the Oct. 7 edition of the *Columbia Gorge News*, Ridgeway said, “I think the majority of what we read in the article was a disgruntled employee.”

As of press time, two anonymous Flagstone employees have corroborated

Scrimshaw’s account of the conditions in the Memory Care Unit during the first week of the outbreak.

While Flagstone was graded positively in ODHS’s recent weekly onsite reviews, the reviews did identify areas where Flagstone’s facilities needed improvement and infection control protocols needed to be reviewed. Specific needs were additional staff for resident care, improved disinfectant processes for PPE, and better practices to ensure frequent communication with residents’ families.

“The facilities are being given ongoing technical assistance to make corrections in procedures,” said Williams. “In the (last week of September), ODHS staff was on site four times to provide technical assistance with infection control — some of these were daylong sessions.”

Said Watson, “It’s important to understand that never did we fail to meet the care needs of our residents. As Caryl (Ridgeway) pointed out, we have employees that, certainly, as we move through COVID and the management of an outbreak in our communities, we understand that, certainly, it’s exhaustive. There have been occasions that it’s been chaotic. But we continue to meet the care needs of our residents.”

“I would like to point out that as we go through this pandemic, employees express their stress in different ways. And I think that there have been occasions ... that they’ve been able to express their stress. But again, the care of our residents was our priority. And we never failed to care for our residents.”

In total, the North Central Public Health District has connected 48 cases of COVID-19 to the outbreak at Flagstone, including residents, employees, and members of their household. Of these 48 cases, 11 people died — all of them residents of the Memory Care Unit.

“COVID-19 is just a horrific

pandemic. Yeah, certainly, our thoughts and prayers go out to our families who lost their loved ones. And it’s a difficult time for all. And our focus continues to be on the care and services for residents,” said Watson.

“What’s important to remember is these (cases) are people’s lives,” said Ridgeway, “And not just the care staff that are giving the care, but they were close to those residents that have passed away. And it’s very hard as somebody who’s been in the industry and caring for seniors, watching them leave when you have that attachment to them. So we’re just very sympathetic to that. And very appreciative of everything that our staff have done at this community and all of our communities during this pandemic. It is not — it has not been easy.”





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TRASH TALK



Q. We need help with event recycling.

Any ideas? Heather, Hood River

A. Heather, our program does offer free basic assistance to event managers to help them plan for event waste reduction and recycling. We also lend Clearstream event recycling receptacles for diverting redeemable bottles and cans. And for very small functions (15-30 people), we lend out “party buckets” with durable cups, plateware and cutlery.

questions to:

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