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Weather
Chilly and rainy all week:
lows around 35, highs
around 50



At Glenwood School, community nourishment

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Sports goes virtual — page B6

Columbia Gorge News

HOOD RIVER | THE DALLES | WHITE SALMON

Wednesday, December 16, 2020 Volume 1, Issue 36

\$1.00

Thanksgiving sparks local COVID-19 spike

Wasco County traces infections to holiday gatherings; outbreak reported in Bingen; Hood River in Extreme Risk

North Central Public Health District (NCPHD) has found a significant amount of Wasco County's recent spike in COVID-19 cases is due to Thanksgiving gatherings, according to a Dec. 9 press release from the district.

A steady single-digit amount of cases were reported in the six days after the holiday. Then a double-digit increase began, reflective of the typical roughly five-to-seven-day timeframe from date of infection to onset of symptoms, NCPHD

reported.

That increase in cases included 48 cases reported in 48 hours, on Dec. 4 and 5. From Dec. 3, through Dec. 8, the county recorded 97 cases.

Enough time has passed since Thanksgiving that NCPHD is now seeing people who got infected from someone who themselves got infected at a Thanksgiving gathering, said Tessa Yoo, a COVID disease intervention specialist for

the health district.

A handful of people attended Thanksgiving gatherings while they were mildly symptomatic, said Jeremy Hawkins, an epidemiologist for NCPHD.

But others only developed symptoms or tested positive a day or two after Thanksgiving.

"In general we think people are capable of spreading the virus up to 48 hours prior to when their symptoms start," Hawkins explained. He

noted the incubation period is 14 days after exposure, so the fallout from Thanksgiving itself could be experienced through this Thursday, Dec. 11.

The health district has received a significant amount of calls from people who said they were exposed to someone on Thanksgiving and are inquiring about testing.

Yoo said she has had a lot of

See **COVID-19**, page 2

Need sparks community response

Empty pantry filled as Gorge responds to growing demand

By Mark Gibson
Columbia Gorge News

"Salvation Army Pantry is full."

So read the subject line of an email sent to supporters of the Community Meal program in The Dalles Dec. 7 by Chris Zukin, who helps organize the volunteers who work to provide a free hot meal to those in need and is a member of the Salvation Army The Dalles Corps board.

The triumphant message was in sharp contrast to another, sent only a week prior on Dec. 2. That message read, in part, "I just spoke to Captain Ray at the Salvation Army. They are out of food and in great need of financial help ... Captain Ray figures it will cost \$10,000 to fill the pantry." Everybody Loves a Fire Fighter (ELFF) donations were down due to COVID-19 changes in the annual Christmas food drive, and the annual Thanksgiving community meal, which provided a hot Thanksgiving meal to go, had cost more than anticipated.

Zukin asked the community to help refill the pantry — and they did, twice over.

"Thank you for your amazing support of the Salvation Army," Zukin wrote Dec. 7. "As of noon today, \$23,650 in donations have been dropped off or picked up from the mail."

And that amount did not include a \$10,000 gift from Google donated to the ELFF drive and an additional \$10,000 contribution from the City of The Dalles.

"This is a beautiful, generous loving community," Zukin said. ELFF Drive
Despite a slow beginning, the

34th annual Everybody Loves A Firefighter (ELFF) Christmas food drive was a remarkable success, due in part to the \$10,000 cash donation from the Google Foundation, according to event organizers. In addition the drive netted 6,810 food items and an additional \$1,724 in donations.

"That was unique," Fire Chief Bob Palmer said of the promised Google donation. "We haven't had a donation like that before."

This year's drive was shorter, only two days, and except in Dallesport, donations were dropped off at

See **FOOD**, page 11



Volunteer Henry Warth, left, loads bags of food into a car as Salvation Army The Dalles Corp business manager Kris Harmon talks with the driver at their food pantry downtown The Dalles. The number of people seeking food assistance has grown significantly since the beginning of the pandemic in March, even as traditional forms of fundraising and food drives drop off.
Mark B. Gibson photo

2021 budget passed

By Jacob Bertram
Columbia Gorge News

WHITE SALMON — The White Salmon City Council approved the 2020-21 budget at the Dec. 2 meeting, finalizing an agreement which will see funds dedicated to hiring a land use planner as well as a social worker within the Bingen-White Salmon Police Department.

Mayor Marla Keethler wrote in the budget summary that the hiring of a land use planner was the most significant change.

"It is my fervent belief that intentional planning is what will set White Salmon on the right course to achieve long-term resiliency as a small-town that is affordable for residents, appealing to tourists, welcoming of entrepreneurs, and supportive of right-sized economic development," Keethler wrote.

The budget also includes funds that would be used to hire an outreach coordinator to support the city's communication efforts. Speaking on the proposal to include such funding, Keethler said that since White Salmon does not have its own community paper anymore, communications efforts from the city have mostly come from Keethler herself.

"I work full time, I've got two kids ... and the extra hours that this person could give would be a huge benefit that I think would be noticeable in the city," said Keethler.

All the positions that the city added to the budget would be hired on as contractors.

During council discussion, Councilor Ashley Post raised a question about the average market rate for a social worker. The proposed budget estimated the city would be charged \$100 per hour for services provided by a social worker, to which Brending responded that "that is probably an appropriate dollar amount."

"We put that dollar amount; there's a lot of work that needs to go into that at the beginning of the year," said Brending, noting the position would be on a contract basis. "Certainly if it looks like it's

See **BUDGET**, page 12

Chamber: 'Shop Local' more critical than ever

Small businesses key to community success

By Walker Sacon
Columbia Gorge News

LISA FARQUHARSON HAS been crying. "You don't want to know how many tears," she says.

This year, she says, some of the local businesses she has shopped at and worked with for years as president of The Dalles Area Chamber of Commerce might not make it through the winter without the community's support.

"This year, more than ever, we need to be supporting our businesses," she said. "People don't look beyond their keyboard, and we need to walk away from the computer, walk away from your phone and walk into a store."

Farquharson said all retail businesses in The Dalles are complying with guidelines and offering safe shopping. "They've made great strides to adapt to everything that's been thrown at them the last 10 months, what have we done?" she said.

"These are your next-door neighbors. They're employing your kids or the student that's across the street from you," she said. "They're paying property taxes. They're paying employment taxes. They're supporting the vitality and the vibrancy of our community and if you don't know what they have to offer, I'd like to have a little chat with you," she said.

Farquharson said each purchase



Yadirah Yañez, a bartender at Zim's Brau Haus in The Dalles, holds a card they use to thank take-out-only customers. Zim's has laid off about half of their staff during in-person dining closures.
Walker Sacon photo

makes a difference. She used a restaurant open for to-go orders as an example.

"They're open the only way they can be. If they close they still have rent, they still have insurance, they still have utilities," she said. Staying open in any capacity means more overhead expense to pay employees and buy supplies.

"If you only get one or two orders a night, you haven't paid for just the employees. You haven't even come close to covering the overhead," she said. "Every purchase makes a difference, if you go from

one to 10 a night, you're getting closer to meeting those overhead requirements."

At Zim's Brau Haus, owners Connie and Bill Ford have had to dip into their savings to make payroll. The Fords said they have continued taking to-go orders—to avoid losing money monthly—to avoid losing the quality staff they've put together over years.

Connie said Zim's can't afford to keep their entire staff working with the loss of revenue from lottery and drink sales. She does the book keeping for the restaurant and said their bottom line was in the negative by thousands despite a sizable profit on food sales.

"Many of our employees have been with us for a long time,

some for more than a decade," Bill said.

Yadirah Yañez is a bartender and server at Zim's. These days she helps handle to-go orders as one of two front-of-house staff still working significant hours.

Yañez said work has sometimes been lonely and she misses the camaraderie she felt when Zim's was full. A newly implemented online ordering process which bypasses the phone hasn't helped her loneliness, but it has helped business.

Online orders and the offer of free delivery within The Dalles has tripled the to-go business, Connie said. She said the increase helps, but the Fords don't know if they'll

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