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**The Dalles High School senior heading to University of Chicago — A12**

**Commission to consider bi-state ownership of Hood River Bridge — A13**

**Sports — B13-14**

**Horizon Christian senior awarded Ford scholarship — A15**

**Weather**  
Cooler and cloudy through the week; Gorge high of 73 Fri. Weekend to reach mid-80s with possible showers.

# Columbia Gorge News

HOOD RIVER | THE DALLES | WHITE SALMON

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Graduating seniors at Columbia High School drive a "reverse parade" through campus Thursday night as teachers, coaches and school staff greet them from the sidewalks and roadside in this photo by teacher Kelsey Lemon. Pictured are, left to right, Olivia Nye, Sydney Thornton and Josey Cobb. The graduation ceremony was June 5. Contributed photo



## Class of '21

A The Dalles High School senior's mortarboard speaks to future successes and blessings during commencement ceremonies at Sorosis Park. The morning ceremonies were live streamed on the school district Facebook page, then students received their diplomas in the company of their families throughout the afternoon. More photos page A15. Mark B. Gibson photo

## Armed man arrested following pursuit, standoff

By Mark Gibson  
Columbia Gorge News

WISHRAM — An armed The Dalles man was arrested May 31 following a pursuit and standoff with police that ended in Wishram, Wash., east of The Dalles.

Brandon Fallis, 38, of The Dalles, was booked into the Klickitat County Jail for unlawful possession of a firearm second degree; attempt to elude police vehicle; intimidating a public servant; malicious mischief second degree; hit and run (attended vehicle); unlawful discharge of a firearm; criminal trespass second degree; obstructing or delaying train and resisting arrest.

See **STANDOFF**, page 10

## Gov. Brown sets June 21 target to end COVID-19 limits in Oregon

By Gary A. Warner  
Oregon Capital Bureau

Nearly all COVID-19 restrictions could be lifted in as early as just over two weeks, Gov. Kate Brown said Friday.

The state is about 127,000 adults short of the goal of getting at least one shot of vaccine into 70 percent of eligible residents.

Once the state crosses the threshold, Brown said she would lift masking, business capacity, event size, social distance and other limits that Oregonians have dealt with for more than a year.

"We can fully reopen — we can all look forward to that," she said.

Local health officials would then take over the daily decision-making and operations in counties from the Oregon Health Authority. Brown said even very large events, such as the Pendleton Round-Up in September, would be good to go once the state hits its target vaccination rate.

On Wednesday, Brown visited

Nine out of 10 deaths are currently among people who have no record of vaccination.

Oregon Health Authority

One Community Health in Hood River to highlight the state's vaccination campaign, and praised the county for their high vaccination rates.

"We need to be taking health care into the community, we are very close, we need to work collaboratively like they are doing in Hood River," Brown said in a video interview with KOIN TV. "We can make this happen, we can reopen and have these COVID-19 safety requirements behind us."

The governor was on hand as the clinic conducted scheduled vaccinations of youth ages 12-17, who were treated to ice cream and

See **COVID-19**, page 8



Sandy Chilate of One Community Health, at left, prepares to administer a COVID-19 vaccine to Jill Reitz, 15, as Oregon Gov. Kate Brown, at far right, looks on. Brown was at the Hood River clinic June 2 to promote the state's vaccination campaign. On Friday, Brown announced the state could reach a 70 percent vaccination rate of eligible residents by June 21, at which time "we can fully reopen," she said. Mark B. Gibson photo

## Body of missing woman recovered

By Jacob Bertram  
Columbia Gorge News

WHITE SALMON — A search and rescue team last week recovered a body, which is believed to be a Husum woman missing since May 24.

Husum resident Ruth Elsasser, 42, had been missing since the morning of Monday, May 24, after it was believed she had gone on a hike, run, or a walk on one of the trails around her house.

County prosecuting attorney and coroner David Quesnel confirmed to *Columbia Gorge News* that the county recovered a body last week, and that there are "reasons to believe it is the missing person out of the west side of the county," citing identifiers consistent with information provided to investigators, such as articles of clothing and a ring that belonged to Elsasser.

By Monday morning, the family had been informed of the discovery. Elsasser's sister, Amy Elsasser Morel L'Horset, shared the news of her loss on Facebook: "I am shattered."

"We all grieve in different ways. I am finding the most comfort by immersing myself deeply with those who were closest to Ruth," Elsasser Morel L'Horset said.

The nursing program Elsasser worked with as an instructor, Frontier Nursing University, also shared the news of Elsasser's passing.

"Please join us in honoring the mother, wife, educator, mentor, and wonderful person she was. We give our utmost condolences to her loved ones," Frontier Nursing University said in a statement.

See **RUTH**, page 3

## Fire burns 170 acres west of The Dalles

By Mark Gibson & Kelsie Cowart  
Columbia Gorge News

THE DALLES — In what fire officials warn may be a prelude to the summer fire season, the Mile Post 85 fire Wednesday, June 2, closed Interstate 84 and forced the evacuation of nearby communities.

"We are experiencing an early start to the wildland fire season," said Fire Chief Bob Palmer of Mid-Columbia Fire & Rescue. "Based on the rapid growth and intensity of this fire, the outlook for this summer is leaning towards a fairly active fire season. We ask that the public please be extremely careful around dry vegetation and be especially vigilant."

Ignited just east of Pinewood Mobile Manor on Old Highway 30 west of The Dalles, the fire is estimated to have burned 170 acres and was 70 percent contained as of Friday, according to Palmer.

The fire spread rapidly, pushed by strong winds and burning in grass, brush and scattered timber. Initial damage assessment from the fire includes Bonneville Power Administration and Public Utility Department infrastructure, two road culverts, a water pump house at Pinewood Mobile Manor as well as fencing, shrubs and landscaping at both Google data centers, and the wooden bridge along riverfront trail near Home At Last animal shelter (HAL), Palmer said.

Interstate 84 was closed both directions as the fire jumped the highway, burning toward the Port of The Dalles.

Neighborhoods in the immediate vicinity of the fire were evacuated for much of the afternoon.

Among those evacuated was HAL on River Road, which was declared completely evacuated only six minutes after receiving the evacuation notice.

The evacuation, issued because of fire spotting in nearby Chenoweth Creek, where a footbridge was damaged, was issued at 3:25 p.m. and the shelter was declared completely evacuated at 3:31 p.m., according to a timeline on the Columbia Gorge Wildland and Fire Information Facebook Page.

Steven Drynen, HAL chief executive officer, said shelter manager Brittany Hopkins orchestrated the speedy evacuation, assisted by "a bunch of volunteers."

Around a dozen cats and kittens and 20 dogs were evacuated to Lana's Kennels in The Dalles. Drynen said Cascade Pet Camp in Hood River also offered to house some of the animals, but couldn't because the freeway was closed during the fire.

All the animals were returned to HAL the following morning.

"We're so proud that everyone stepped up," said Drynen, "(there were) so many people (to help) that



Traffic heading east on Interstate 84 passes Mile Post 85, still smoldering along the roadway. These trucks and cars were "parked" just west of Rowena State Park for almost an hour as the interstate was shut down due to the fire. Mark B. Gibson photo

they were turning them away at the checkpoint on River Road ... we are full of gratitude for it." Drynen said HAL wanted to thank the firefighters, as well as everyone who came to assist them in their sudden evacuation.

Firefighters from Mid-Columbia Fire and Rescue, Mosier Rural Fire District, West Side Fire Department, Klickitat County Fire Department, Parkdale Fire Department, Wy'East Fire District, Cascade Locks Fire and EMS, Hood River Fire Department, Oregon Department of Forestry and the U.S. Forest Service were able to stop

the forward progress of the fire on the evening of June 2. The fire is now fully contained.

The cause of the fire is under investigation.

On Thursday, crews and engines from Mid-Columbia Fire and Rescue, Oregon Department of Forestry and the U.S. Forest Service continued to check for residual heat and extinguish them (mop-up operations) focusing on areas around the Pinewood Mobile Manor, Taylor Lake and Chenoweth Creek. Fire officials anticipated having

See **FIRE**, page 2

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