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Weather  
**Not as hot as last week — high of 102 in The Dalles Sunday, week-long averages in 90s, breezy Wednesday**



**Fourth of July photos: White Salmon, Hood River and The Dalles — A13 and online**

**Hydro Flask fundraiser helps migrant workers — A9**

**Sports — A14-15**

**4-H shares history with Hood River Co. Fair — B1**

# Columbia Gorge News

HOOD RIVER | THE DALLES | WHITE SALMON

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## Celebrating the Fourth



**Fort Dalles Fourth firework watchers gather on the intersection of Union Street and the Riverfront Trail to watch the firework show over the Columbia River Sunday evening, July 4. Additional photos, page A13. Mark B. Gibson photo**



**Riverside Riders 4-H Club member Kasia Hylton drives fellow member Colt Lawson in a red, white, and blue-themed John Deere down Jewett Boulevard in White Salmon. The Goonies Motorsports Tail End Support Team, driven by the two youngsters, won the contest for Most Patriotic Vehicle in the White Salmon Fourth of July Parade and Celebration in the Park. Jacob Bertram photo**

### FIRE WATCH

## Wildfire response 'working'

By Mark Gibson  
 Columbia Gorge News

When the Valley View Fire (also called the Sunset Valley Fire) was first reported July 1, conditions were reminiscent of those facing firefighters during the Substation Fire of 2018. Both fires started within 1/2 mile of each other, were driven by high winds into dry fuels.

The Substation Fire consumed almost 80,000 acres in Wasco and Sherman counties, and destroyed four homes and four outbuildings. At its height, it was the nation's "top priority" wildfire due to the number of at risk.

The Valley View Fire, in contrast, was held to 987 acres, damaged one barn, several outbuildings, multiple vehicles and a portion of a cherry orchard.

Mid-Columbia Fire and Rescue Chief Bob Palmer credited local response and the quick work of the Oregon Fire Marshall's Office with the difference.

"Without the resources we had today, including the three additional task forces and air support from OSFM, we would not have stopped it as quickly and the fire would have grown much larger," said Palmer. "What the state is

See **FIRE**, page 3

## Swimming with the apps

### Local nonprofit helps you swim without fear

By Gail Oberst  
 For Columbia Gorge News

There's nothing more refreshing on a hot summer day than to splash in the cool Columbia River or the falls and streams that feed into it.

But before you dive, take a minute to research your favorite swimming hole. If you like to dive with a mouth-wide-open smile on your face, you could emerge from the water with more than a cool attitude.

Drinking water where unhealthy levels of the E. coli bacteria occur can cause diarrhea, nausea and fever. Although the E. coli bacteria lives in every healthy warm-blooded animal's gut and often ends up in local waters, some types of fecal matter, when ingested, can cause illness in humans.



So, how do you play in the summer without getting sick? Not swim? Of course not. Water is The Gorge's raison d'être.

Lorri Epstein to the rescue, a fish biologist and water quality director for Columbia Riverkeeper, in Hood

River. Among other work, Epstein is tasked with testing the waters in and around the Columbia River for E. coli bacteria. She then posts her findings to the public Swim Guide app and website, allowing locals — and visitors — to make healthy



**Columbia Riverkeeper Director Lorri Epstein, at left, closely examines a sample of river water at the Hood River Spit. The lab needs 100 mg of water for the best possible sample. Signs like the one above can be seen at recreation sites throughout the Gorge where samples have returned elevated levels of contamination. Noah Noteboom photos**

choices around where they swim.

The guide is at [www.theswimguide.org](http://www.theswimguide.org). Epstein since 2009 has been testing local waters for the nonprofit

See **WATER**, page 11

## Policy addresses mental, emotional health

By Jacob Bertram  
 Columbia Gorge News

WHITE SALMON — It's all come full circle for Gabrielle Gilbert.



Gabrielle Gilbert

After advocating locally for years to see policy changes implemented in the White Salmon Valley School District that would address students' social and emotional learning needs, Gilbert's overall goal for taking the policy statewide culminated in a state bill signed into law by Gov. Jay Inslee last year that will take effect by the beginning of the 2021-22 school year.

According to the Washington Office of Superintendent of

See **GILBERT**, page 11

## States lift COVID restrictions

Staff Report  
 Columbia Gorge News

Oregon Gov. Kate Brown has signed an executive order to lift all COVID-19 health and safety restrictions, which includes Oregon's statewide mask mandate and county risk level system, effective June 30.

There will no longer be restrictions in place on physical distancing or capacity limits, as previously outlined in the county risk level

system.

However, masks will still be required in certain setting such as airports, public transportation, and health care facilities.

Currently, 69.5% of Oregon residents 18 and over have received at least one dose of a COVID-19 vaccine.

"It is because of this success that we can move Oregon forward, and into the next chapter of this pandemic," Brown said. "We are ready."

In a letter to the editor July 2, Dr. Mimi McDonell, health officer for North Central Public Health District, noted the pandemic was not, however, over.

"I am incredibly grateful and proud of the compassion, ingenuity, hard work and generosity shown by the residents of our community," she wrote. "It is important to remember, however, that although we feel very done with COVID-19, it is not quite done with us. Although low in

numbers, infections and hospitalizations from COVID-19 are still happening, with the vast majority occurring in unvaccinated people. Children under 12 and some individuals are unable to receive the vaccine at this time, leaving them susceptible to infection. Those who are immune-compromised may be vulnerable to infection even after being vaccinated.

"Finally, there are still

See **COVID**, page 8

## Plans begin for homeless shelter in TD

Site sought for new \$1.5 million 'navigation center' to serve multiple local agencies

By Alana Lackner  
 Columbia Gorge News

THE DALLES — The Mid-Columbia Community Action Council recently received \$1.5 million for the development of a navigation center in The Dalles.

MCCAC Executive Director Kenny LaPoint spoke at the city council meeting on June 28 and said that the navigation center

would serve as a multi-agency service site, as well as a homeless shelter. The current shelter would move to the new building, LaPoint said, as would many local agencies.

The MCCAC still has to find a location for the navigation center, LaPoint said. "We're looking throughout The Dalles to find a site that will work for this project," he said.

The funds come from Oregon

House Bill 5006, the budget reconciliation bill, which awarded millions of dollars to agencies across the state.

Despite the \$1.5 million from HB 5006, LaPoint said the MCCAC foresees needing more funding for full completion of the project.

Multiple local organizations have already pledged money to the project, including the Mid-Columbia Center for Living and

One Community Health, he said. He believes it will be a worthwhile endeavor for the community in the long-run.

"It's really good news for this community," LaPoint said. "It's going to get a resource into The Dalles that we have probably needed for a really long time and Mid-Columbia Community Action is very excited to take the lead on this project."

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