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Weather
Monday thru Wednesday to see lower temps in the upper 50s. Later on it will warm up to mid-60s thru the week. Chance of rain Sunday.



Basking in the glow at The Dalles National Neon Sign Museum — page B2

CGCC president joins Latino student initiative — page A9

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COVID and the Arts — page B10

Columbia Gorge News

HOOD RIVER | THE DALLES | WHITE SALMON

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Abigail Elder named HR city manager

■ **By Noah Noteboom**
Columbia Gorge News

HOOD RIVER — When the calendar turns to Nov. 1, the City of Hood River will have a new city manager. Abigail Elder was chosen from a pool of three finalists. Elder's most recent experience comes from the City of Beaverton where she was the director of community services and engagement. She also served in the position of library director from 2013 to 2018.

While leading Beaverton's community services and engagement, Elder was an adviser to the city manager and mayor. She helped set and track the priorities of different interdepartmental programs.

"She brings energy and expertise in areas the city is headed in the future," said Mayor Kate McBride.



Abigail Elder

Elder's track record promoting diversity, equity and inclusion led the city council to hire the Minnesota native. She says the council's priorities align with her experience and interests.

"It is an honor to have been selected for this position," Elder said. "I look forward to working with the city council, staff, and residents to ensure that Hood River remains a vibrant and welcoming place for everyone."

Elder earned her bachelor's

degree in political science from St. Olaf College. At the University of Wisconsin-Madison, she graduated with her masters in library and information studies. She then enrolled in Portland State where she received her Masters of Public Administration (MPA).

Elder will begin her work with Hood River on Nov. 1. Tours are being scheduled to get Elder an idea of the behind the scenes work in Hood River.

COVID-19

Gorge COVID cases decline

■ **By Mark Gibson**
Columbia Gorge News

In the course of the pandemic, roughly 10% of Wasco County residents have contracted COVID, 2,685 people have been infected, and 39 have died, according to Health Officer Dr. Mimi McDonell of North Central Public Health District (NCPHD), speaking before the Wasco County Board of Commissioners Oct. 6. In Sherman County, 143 residents (7.3%) have contracted the disease, and three have died. Gilliam county has recorded 144 cases (7.3%) and four have died.

The August surge, driven by the delta variant, saw the highest cases reported to date in Wasco County, with September seeing the second highest case count. Sherman and Gilliam counties saw a similar increase over the summer, while Hood River had about half the number of summer cases.

Wasco County saw its second highest weekly case count the last week of September, with 156 cases. "That is pretty disappointing in some ways, but not surprising," she said, noting the increase is largely driven by the greater ability of the delta variant to spread quickly.

Compared mathematically based on cases per 100,000 residents, Wasco County reported 571.5 cases per 100,000; Sherman 390, Gilliam 201 and Hood River 331.5. All were higher than the state average of 244.2 cases per 100,000.

On a positive note, McDonell noted daily cases of COVID-19 are decreasing throughout the state and across the U.S. "This is what we want to see," she said. Hospitalizations are also decreasing, as are the number of COVID-19 patients in Intensive Care Unit beds and on ventilators. "It does seem this end of summer surge is abating, and that is happening across the state," she said.

In region 6, which is Mid-Columbia Medical Center in The Dalles and Providence Hood River Memorial Hospital in Hood River, are seeming a similar decline in hospitalizations. "They have been taking care of an awful lot of COVID patients, not just from the region but from Washington and many other counties," McDonell told the board. "They are just doing a tremendous amount of work, caring for COVID patients."

The number of people getting vaccinated has continued throughout the region. In Oregon, 75.5% of residents over 18 are now vaccinated. In Wasco County that number is 68.4%, Hood River County 80.3%, Sherman County 63.6% and Gilliam County, 46.4%.

For those not yet vaccinated, the North Central Public Health District is again providing vaccination clinics at the Fort Dalles Readiness Center in The Dalles.

See **COVID-19**, page 8

Lost Paco treks 18 miles to Mt. Defiance

■ **By Alana Lackner**
Columbia Gorge News

HOOD RIVER — When Jennifer Wilson's little chihuahua, Paco, got lost while they were hiking, she was worried she would never see him again.

Wilson, an eighth grade reading and writing teacher at Hood River Middle School, loves hiking and mountain biking. She's taken her two dogs, Gigi and Paco, with her on her excursions tons of times without a problem. However, when they went hiking on Mt. Defiance on Sunday, Sept. 26, they got lost on a new trail and things took a turn for the worse.

Wilson and her dogs had been out for about four hours at this time. Using Google Maps, Wilson was able to find a road and was lucky enough to find two kind souls, Frank and Mary Ellen Lauren, who offered to give them a ride down the mountain and back to her car.

She agreed, but Paco didn't. Gigi, a lab and Baja mix, was quick to jump in the back, but Paco refused and instead kept sprinting into the woods, she said.

After trying and failing to catch



Jennifer and Paco are pictured on a hike in Post Canyon. The chihuahua spend three days lost in the woods before being found near the summit of Mt. Defiance. Contributed photo

See **PACO**, page 6

Mosbrucker calls for reversing some police reforms

■ **By Jacob Bertram**
Columbia Gorge News

WHITE SALMON — Washington Rep. Gina Mosbrucker (R-Goldendale) is calling for a special legislative session to focus on fixes to recent police reform legislation that went into effect earlier this year.

Mosbrucker, representative for the 14th legislative district, which encompasses Klickitat and Skamania counties and parts of Yakima County, is also the ranking Republican member of the House Public Safety Committee who witnessed several pieces of legislation

that addressed policing in the state of Washington pass through committee, then both chambers, and receive sign-off by Gov. Jay Inslee at this year's legislative session.

In an op-ed submitted to *The Columbian* late last month, Mosbrucker said the suite of reforms "represent not only some of the most extensive experiments in police reform in the nation but jeopardize public safety."

In the op-ed she cited two



Rep. Gina Mosbrucker

specific bills as "especially concerning" — House Bill 1054, which establishes requirements for tactics and equipment used by peace officers, and House Bill 1310, which addresses permissible use of force by police officers.

Mosbrucker said in an interview with *Columbia Gorge News* that she spent a few days late last month on a listening tour of her district, where she met with law enforcement officers and other first responders of her district.

She said that during the tour, officers told her they are being put in a situation where they are having a tougher time responding to calls.

Mosbrucker tied the sentiment to House Bill 1310, which she said requires officers to verify "probable cause," as opposed to a less stringent standard of "reasonable suspicion" to use force — which can now mean anything ranging from guiding a suspect's hands into cuffs to deadly force. They must also exhaust any and all de-escalation tactics before using force.

"I believe we owe it to our officers and our communities to hold a special legislative session now to change these new laws and return to a 'reasonable suspicion' "

See **REFORM**, page 2

Boy has birthday fundraiser for Babies First program

■ **By Neita Cecil**
North Central Public Health District

For Korbin McComas's ninth birthday, he asked his guests for donations to Babies First, a program at North Central Public Health District (NCPHD) that helped him in his first years of life after he was born weighing just over 3 pounds.

A micro preemie, he was born more than three months early, said his mom, Crystal Dodge.

"I just want people to know about the program because a lot of people don't know about it, and the program really helped a lot," Dodge said. Korbin has overcome a lot of the issues he faced as a micro preemie, his mom said.

Korbin and mom brought in a load of gifts earlier this week and presented them to Lori Treichel, a registered

nurse at NCPHD who has run the Babies First program for 16 years. This was the first donation of its kind, Treichel said, adding it "was great because I think the program is an underutilized resource that people don't know about, and it feels really good to know that you helped a family."

Babies First is a nurse home visiting program that serves pregnant women and children up to age 5. The goal is to improve health outcomes for mom and baby. About 80 people are on the program now, and most are referred by their doctor and are seen once a month, though visits have been virtual due to the pandemic.

The nurses help pregnant women navigate issues ranging from high blood pressure to pregnancy complications to breastfeeding. She helps them understand medical jargon and can even connect them to other

services like WIC and Early Head Start, and help them apply for the Oregon Health Plan, cash assistance and food assistance, or even help them with the steps to get their general education degree (GED) or take college classes.

Babies get weight checks and developmental screenings along with answering parents' questions about colic, teething, and breastfeeding. Dodge was taking her son to five different doctors, and Treichel was her "middlesman" to help navigate it all. "Lori broke it down simple for me," she said. "Not having that help, it would've been so stressful for me. I just really want people to know what the Babies First program is and how helpful it can be for a new mom."

For more information about the Babies First program, call NCPHD at 541-506-2600.



Korbin McComas, 9, sits with Lori Treichel, who runs the Babies First program at NCPHD. McComas, who was served by the program as a "micro preemie," asked for gifts to donate to Babies First in lieu of birthday gifts. Contributed photo

Contact Us at
541-386-1234
541-296-2141

delivery: Subscribe@gorgenews.com
news tips: News@gorgenews.com
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