Events: 'We're all feeling this pain together'

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pandemic to the North Coast.

"We have not seen anything like this in our lifetimes," the governor told reporters on Thursday in Portland. "And all we need to do is look around at what is happening around the entire world."

As of late Thursday, there were 30 cases of the virus statewide.

"We're all feeling this pain together," said Jennifer Crockett, the Liberty Theatre's executive director, referring to the closing of the Commercial Street theater and the impact it will have on local businesses, restaurants and hotels.

Crockett said the theater "wants to be careful with patrons, volunteers and staff" who are in the demographics most at risk from the virus.

The decision to close came after a drastic slowdown in ticket sales. Crockett said she didn't think the theater could sell 250 tickets for any of the scheduled shows, including Saturday's performance of Work Dance Co.'s "Opulence! A Dance Extravaganza!," an Aerosmith tribute band and a concert featuring classical composer Angelique Poteat.

Crockett said most of the events are postponed until the summer or fall. Patrons will hear from the theater regarding refunds and tickets next week.

The Liberty will push back its 95th birthday party, which was scheduled for April, until later this year.

State Health Officer Dean Sidelinger said Oregon could see up to 75,000 new cases of COVID-19 by mid-May unless the state takes measures aimed at stopping the spread of the disease.

Brown closed public schools from Monday through March 31. The governor recommended that businesses increase physical space between employees, limit in-person meetings and travel and consider staggered work schedules.

Washington Gov. Jay Inslee issued similar restrictions in his state, where at least 37 people have died from the virus as of Friday afternoon.

Hailey Hoffman/The Astorian

Visitors eat cheese and sip wine on the stage of the Liberty Theatre after touring the building this year. The theater will close through late April because of the coronavirus.

Difficult decisions

Within a few hours after Brown's announcement on large gatherings late Wednesday, the Clatsop County Job and Career Fair scheduled for Thursday at the Seaside Civic and Convention Center was canceled.

"Based on the new directive from Gov. Brown ... we have made the difficult but correct decision to cancel," Kevin Leahy, the executive director of Clatsop Economic Development Resources, which organizes the job fair, said in an email.

Clatsop County Manager Don Bohn said the county is in communication with medical providers, the state and other stakeholders monitoring the situation. He said staff are spending a lot of time planning for how to continue to run county operations after cases are reported locally.

"We're going to go through this together as a community," Bohn said. "And so we're going to learn as we go and we're going to do the best that we can."

Clatsop County Circuit Court said jurors who are in higher risk categories of severe illness may contact the court to reschedule their jury service.

The county is also warning people about a misinformation campaign being spread about a downloadable app for tracking coronavirus cases. The link will install malware on individuals' devices.

In Astoria, the pandemic canceled a pandemic lecture, "Pandemic, the 1918/1919 Spanish Influenza Epidemic in Clatsop County," planned for Fort George Brewery. Women Interested in Going to School (WINGS) conference at Clatsop Community College on Saturday is canceled. The Clatsop County chapter of Court Appointed Special Advocates has canceled its Hearts & Hands event. Clatsop County Fairgrounds will not hold any upcoming events, including, the Lower Columbia Classic Car Club Swap Meet. The Lower Columbia Q Center is closed. The Jane Barnes Revue and the Special Olympics-Clatsop County Basketball Jamboree are postponed.

Astoria Library events are canceled through April 8. Library Director Jimmy Pearson said the library will remain open. The Cannon Beach History Center & Museum is closed through March 30. The Coaster Theatre has postponed the opening of "Play On!" until April 3.

The show goes on for other events. Second Saturday Art Walk is still on in Astoria. The Ten Fifteen Theater's production of the Irish ghost story play "The Weir," will play this weekend.

Daric Moore, who owns the theater, said the theater is "taking precautions" and will have hand sanitizer and gloves available. The theater seats 87 and uses cloth chairs that will be cleaned after shows. "There's not a whole lot that people touch in the space," he said.

Chef Chris Holen will still hold his Chef Outta Water food and music event at the Astoria Armory on Saturday featuring a chef from Mississippi. So far, the event has sold over 150 tickets. Holen said the event will not go over 250 people. There will be hand sanitizer available.

The Astoria Downtown Historic District Association is hosting a business owner's forum on Thursday in response to coronavirus. The event is at 5:15 p.m. at the Columbian Theater. Officials from the Clatsop County Health Department, Port of Astoria and Astoria Mayor Bruce Jones will answer questions and provide information on the efforts to mitigate the pandemic. The event is free and is limited to 125 people.

Impact on convention center

In Seaside, the social gathering ban is felt largest at the convention center. The convention center was slated to host over 10 events in March and April that have either been canceled or postponed.

Along with the job fair, Oregon Ghost Conference, the Oregon Department of Revenue, American Public Works Association and the ACBL Sectional Bridge Tournament all canceled.

Pouring at the Coast, Sip and Savor, MHAO Peerpocalypse, North Coast Round-Up, the Oregon Scholastic Chess Federation Tournament and a Kiwanis pancake feed are planning to reschedule.

"We're hopeful that we can reschedule some of them, but it's all based on availability, and our calendar is filling up pretty quickly as we get past the month of April, so we're trying to find available dates for some of the groups who are interested in rebooking. It is their decision that they reschedule their event," said Russell Vandenberg, the general manager of the convention center.

Vandenberg said the cancellations are "definitely going to make an impact in our business model as well as the economic impact on the community. It's far-reaching, well beyond the convention center. It impacts the hotels, the restaurants, any hospitality business that serves tourists, it's definitely going to trickle down to other businesses."

The convention center is open for business, though events need to be under the 250-person limit.

"We don't promote our own events, so we rely on our reach that we have with our meeting planners. It's not typical to find a group that's willing to book an event within 90 days," he said. "The large bookings, we see them two to three years in advance, so it's not likely that we'll find a conference."

Vandenberg said the convention center and Oregon Fine Foods catering will both lose money because of the cancellations. He said they are trying to rebook everything they can and be "creative in our scheduling."

"April will be a slim month for us," he said.

Nicole Bales of The Astorian and Jake Thomas of the Oregon Capital Bureau contributed to this report.

Sears: 'We have worked around these issues to the best of our abilities'

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information technology specialist with the Oregon Air National Guard, and Thea Dyal, an employee at Sears Hometown since 2003, took over the Marine Drive store downtown from Jim and Susan Montgomery in 2015.

The couple announced the closure this week with posters on the windows thanking customers for their support and a sheet of paper venting their frustration with not being able to get products being advertised to customers.

"We have worked around these issues to the best of our abilities for over a year, but we regret that Sears Hometown has not been able to resolve their issues nor provide sufficient merchandise to meet customer demand as well as their contractual obligations to us," the note stated.

Sears, which filed for bankruptcy in 2018, is down to just over 400 Sears and Kmart stores nationwide. The national retailer spun off more than 1,000 Hometown and 120 Outlet stores in 2012 into Hometown and Outlet, a publicly traded company selling franchises around the U.S. Owners operate as independent franchises selling Sears merchandise. Hometown stores specialize in appliances, hardware and lawn care.

Dyal argues the Sears Hometown store was successful when they took over and still would be, if not for issues with getting the right inventory.

"I really don't feel we were affected by Walmart, Home Depot or the internet," she said.

The closure of Sears Hometown comes after downtown's other national retail presence, J.C. Penney, closed in 2017 following the declining fortunes of the national retailer.

Edward Stratton/The Astorian

Rick Fried and Thea Dyal took ownership of the Sears Hometown Store in Astoria in 2015.

The Hometown and Outlet stores have similarly struggled as national retailers have downsized. By June, the number of Hometown stores had declined to fewer than 500. A Sears Hometown store in Scappoose recently closed, and another in Longview, Washington, is listed for sale.

Fried and Dyal are also selling the 13,000-square-foot building their store occupies on Marine Drive. The building includes a basement and loading docks facing a view of the Columbia River protected by nondevelopment zones recently approved by the City Council as part of the Riverfront Vision Plan guiding development along the Columbia River.

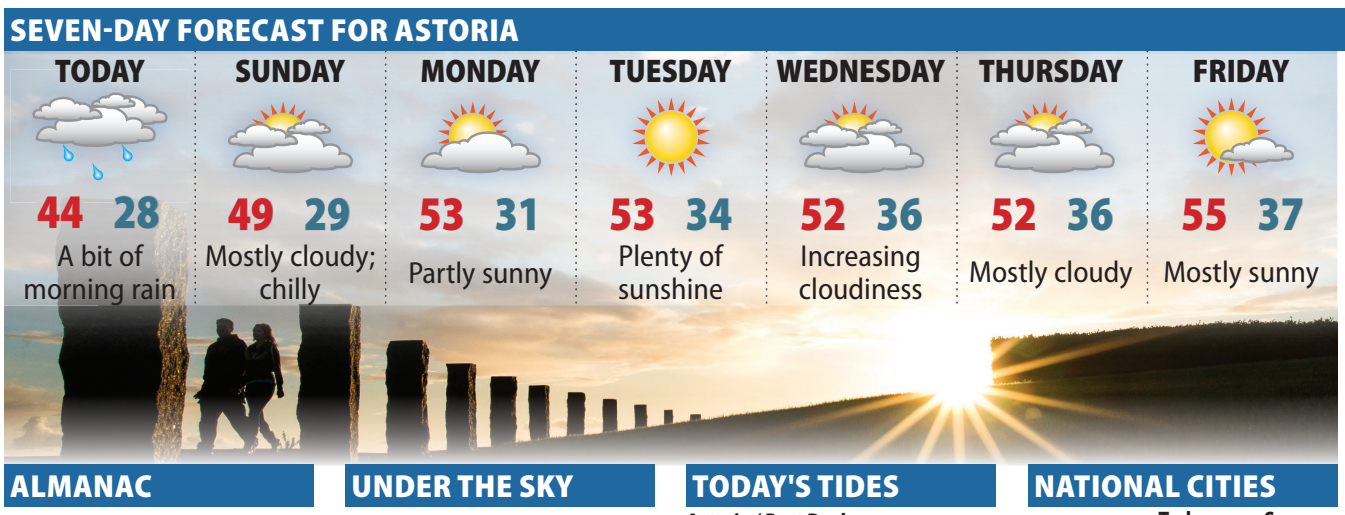
As for their next phase, Fried said Dyal is focusing on taking care of their young son.

"I'm thinking about getting into appliance repair, but I've also been offered a couple of jobs around the community," he said. "We're a desert wasteland of appliance repair, because there's not a lot of people who do it, and it's a needed service."

SEVEN-DAY FORECAST FOR ASTORIA

AccuWeather – DOWNLOAD THE FREE APP

TODAY	SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
44 28	49 29	53 31	53 34	52 36	52 36	55 37
A bit of morning rain	Mostly cloudy; chilly	Partly sunny	Plenty of sunshine	Increasing cloudiness	Mostly cloudy	Mostly sunny



ALMANAC

Astoria through Thursday

Temperatures

High/low	50/33
Normal high/low	54/39
Record high	74 in 1941
Record low	24 in 1897

Precipitation

Thursday	Trace
Month to date	1.83"
Normal month to date	3.00"
Year to date	26.87"
Normal year to date	20.64"

Forecasts and graphics provided by **AccuWeather, Inc.** ©2020

UNDER THE SKY

Tonight's Sky: William Herschel discovers Uranus (1781).

Source: Jim Todd, OMSI

SUN AND MOON

Sunrise today	7:30 a.m.
Sunset tonight	7:20 p.m.
Moonrise today	12:47 a.m.
Moonset today	10:32 a.m.

Last	New	First	Full
Mar 16	Mar 24	Apr 1	Apr 7

TODAY'S TIDES

Time	High (ft.)	Time	Low (ft.)
Astoria / Port Docks			
5:14 a.m.	8.9	12:08 p.m.	0.1
6:20 p.m.	6.8	11:58 p.m.	2.2
Cape Disappointment			
4:51 a.m.	8.8	11:16 a.m.	0.0
5:54 p.m.	6.7	11:09 p.m.	2.6
Hammond			
5:02 a.m.	9.1	11:35 a.m.	-0.1
6:03 p.m.	7.0	11:29 p.m.	2.3
Warrenton			
5:09 a.m.	9.3	11:52 a.m.	0.2
6:15 p.m.	7.2	11:42 p.m.	2.3
Knappa			
5:51 a.m.	9.1	12:12 a.m.	1.1
6:57 p.m.	7.1	1:09 p.m.	0.1
Depoe Bay			
4:04 a.m.	9.1	10:49 a.m.	0.0
5:10 p.m.	6.9	10:38 p.m.	2.6

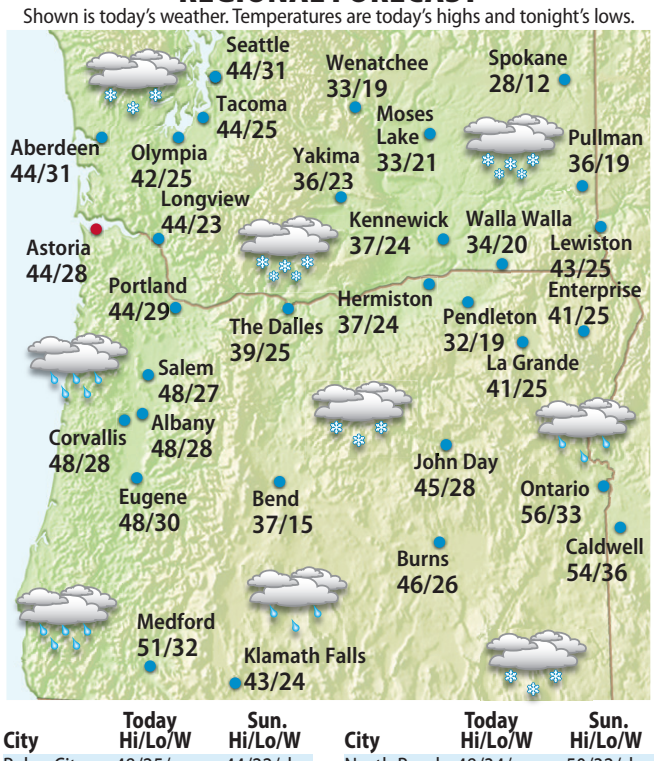
NATIONAL CITIES

City	Today Hi/Lo/W	Sun. Hi/Lo/W
Atlanta	73/57/c	66/49/r
Boston	53/32/s	44/26/s
Chicago	37/32/sn	43/31/s
Dallas	75/54/t	67/58/c
Denver	54/30/s	59/34/pc
Honolulu	80/68/sh	81/69/sh
Houston	81/64/c	78/64/c
Los Angeles	63/53/sh	64/50/sh
Miami	85/72/pc	85/71/pc
New York City	54/37/pc	50/32/s
Phoenix	72/53/pc	76/55/pc
San Francisco	57/47/sh	59/47/r
Wash., DC	59/43/pc	55/35/pc

Weather (W): **s**-sunny, **pc**-partly cloudy, **c**-cloudy, **sh**-showers, **t**-thunderstorms, **r**-rain, **sf**-snow flurries, **sn**-snow, **i**-ice.

REGIONAL FORECAST

Shown is today's weather. Temperatures are today's highs and tonight's lows.



City	Today Hi/Lo/W	Sun. Hi/Lo/W	City	Today Hi/Lo/W	Sun. Hi/Lo/W
Baker City	48/25/sn	44/22/sh	North Bend	48/34/r	50/32/sh
Brookings	45/36/r	47/36/r	Roseburg	49/34/c	50/32/sh
Ilwaco	45/31/r	48/32/c	Seaside	44/28/r	49/28/c
Newberg	44/29/c	46/27/sh	Springfield	48/29/r	50/25/sh
Newport	45/30/r	46/29/c	Vancouver	41/28/r	44/26/c