

Disaster: Health authority releases daily status reports

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“In addition, a significant part of our disaster declaration request was for individual assistance for all Oregon counties and tribes — including child care assistance, crisis counseling, disaster case management, disaster legal services and disaster unemployment assistance for Oregonians. “That request is still also pending, and would provide significant relief to Oregon families if approved.” Trump on Sunday announced he will extend the federal government’s voluntary 15-day social distancing guidelines, which were set to expire Monday, until the end of April. The governors of Oregon, Washington, California and other states have issued separate stay-at-home orders to help contain the spread of the virus. The president had said



Hailey Hoffman/The Astorian

President Donald Trump declared a major disaster in Oregon over the coronavirus.

last week he wanted to reopen the nation’s economy by Easter. “I want our life back again,” Trump said at a White House briefing of the coronavirus task force. The coronavirus has resulted in widespread unemployment as many businesses close to com-

ply with social distancing restrictions. During the week of March 15, the Oregon Employment Department received more than 76,500

initial claims for unemployment insurance benefits. Clatsop County, which has averaged between 30 and 50 unemployment claims a week throughout the year, jumped to 340 between March 14 and March 21. The Oregon Health Authority reported 606 cases and 16 deaths from the coronavirus statewide as of Monday morning. The health authority tracked 102 test results in Clatsop County as of Monday, including three positive cases. The Clatsop County Public Health Department on Monday released narrower age ranges for the three positive cases. The first reported case was a woman between 30 and 40 years old who lives in the northern part of the county. The second case was a man between 40 and 50 years old who lives in the southern part of the county. The third case was a man between 30 and 40 years old who lives in the southern part of the county and was a contact of the man in the second case. The county had previously used broader age ranges — 35 to 54 years old — citing privacy concerns. The Astorian filed a request for the information under the Oregon public records law, arguing that the county should disclose the age distribution of local cases consistent with the updated statewide disclosures by the Oregon Health Authority. The health authority, after direction from Gov. Brown last week, is releasing daily situational status reports with demographic information on COVID-19 cases in Oregon, including narrower age ranges. Edward Stratton contributed to this report.

Child care: County still figuring out which essential workers need help

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Emergency responders are the priority for child care, said Jill Quackenbush, with the Clatsop County Public Health Department. But she is working with hospitals and cities to assess the needs for all essential workers in fields like food and agriculture, transportation, communications and public works. Under the sweeping executive order Gov. Kate Brown issued in March, private child care providers had to close their doors by last Wednesday. They are allowed to reopen only for essential workers and provide emergency child care. Warrenton expects to be able to accommodate up to 20 children. Astoria

has identified 16 children in need of care, but Superintendent Craig Hoppes expects the need to grow, though he is not sure by how much. The county is still figuring out which emergency responders and other essential workers need child care and also how many private facilities are interested in providing it. “There’s a good chance that many of our private providers are going to choose not to switch to emergency care,” Quackenbush said. “It just might be difficult with their setup to meet the standards (for health and safety).” There are already extensive state regulations around cleaning for licensed care facilities, but emergency child care



Hailey Hoffman/The Astorian

Lil’ Sprouts Academy at Capt. Robert Gray School in Astoria will offer child care for essential workers.

would bring additional standards, including limitations on class sizes. Some child care providers also have their own children in the home and do not want to risk the possibility of exposure to the disease, Quackenbush added. Warrenton and Astoria’s facilities existed before the outbreak, so reopening them to child care is easy compared to starting a program from scratch, school and city officials say. Michelle DeVos, who leads the preparatory program at Warrenton and will now be in charge of the emergency care classrooms, expects to tweak things like how kids move between outside play areas to classrooms or interactions in class. But cleaning standards will be roughly the same, she said. The hardest part that she foresees? “Teaching social distancing to preschoolers,” she said.



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