

IN BRIEF

Circuit Court updates restrictions over virus

Oregon Supreme Court Chief Justice Martha Walters has extended her order for courthouses statewide to postpone most trials, hearings and limit in-person court service until at least June.

The order was also amended to implement the governor’s stay-at-home order. The Clatsop County Circuit Court has amended its order to reflect the changes.

Only one courtroom will be in operation unless it is necessary to open another courtroom for an essential proceeding.

All nonessential hearings will be set out until after July 3. Most essential hearings will be conducted remotely via teleconference.

The customer service window will close every day from noon to 1 p.m. and after 4 p.m.

Most payment requirements are suspended, and fees waived while the restrictions are in place. New collection actions will also be avoided when possible.

South County Food Bank ramps up for need

SEASIDE — More than double the need.

That’s what the South County Food Bank estimates as the impacts of the coronavirus reverberate through the community.

Numbers have increased from 70 to 80 visitors before the virus to more than 150 on a recent Tuesday, volunteer Maureen Casterline said.

“One of the things we are seeing is people who have not had to use the food pantry in the past,” she said. “For them it’s really difficult. All of a sudden they have to show up here. It’s heartbreaking.”

Servers, bartenders and hotel employees who have not had to rely on the safety net in the past are coming to the food bank, Casterline said.

“Somebody said, ‘I never had to be here. I went to work every day, 40 hours a week at a minimum wage job at the mall here.’ But when the shop closed, she no longer had employment. When she goes back to work, she said she’s going to do things differently. I think that means to save money.”

The interior of the food bank on N. Roosevelt Drive is closed to visitors, but drive-up windows allow social distancing. Volunteers come into the parking lot to share guidelines and product availability.

“We don’t use the lobby at all,” Casterline said. “We open this window, sign people in, and then we have them go to the back loading dock.”

United Way creates new fund to help during virus response

United Way of Clatsop County has established the COVID-19 Response Fund to help health and human service organizations meet the most critical needs caused by the coronavirus crisis.

The Lower Columbia River Chief Petty Officer Association made the first donation of \$10,000 to the fund.

Funding will be awarded to local nonprofit health and human service organizations to help people with food, shelter, rental, utility assistance and other needs.

To apply for funding, visit www.clatsopunitedway.org. For more information, contact Jennifer Holen at 503-325-1961 or uwccdirector@pacifier.com.

— *The Astorian*

DEATH

April 1, 2020

KELLY, Betty May, 90, of Seaside, died in Hillsboro. Caldwell’s Funeral & Cremation Arrangement Center of Seaside is in charge of the arrangements.

ON THE RECORD

Disorderly conduct

- Darcy Blair, 23, of Seaside, was arrested Tuesday on 16th Avenue and N. Franklin Street in Seaside for disorderly conduct.
- Aaron Ledford, 48, of Seaside, was arrested Tuesday on 16th Avenue

and N. Franklin Street in Seaside for disorderly conduct.

DUII

- Darin Thomas Utti, 52, of Seaside, was arrested Wednesday on Lewis and Clark Road for driving under the influence of intoxicants.

PUBLIC MEETINGS

MONDAY

Seaside City Council, 5 p.m., (electronic communication meeting).

Astoria City Council, 7 p.m., City Hall, 1095 Duane St.

TUESDAY

Port of Astoria Commission, 4 p.m., (teleconference).

Clatsop Care Health District Board, 5 p.m., (virtual meeting via Zoom).

Seaside Planning Commission, 6 p.m., City Hall, 989 Broadway.

For many dealing with virus symptoms, testing is a challenge

Tests are not widely available

By KATIE FRANKOWICZ and NICOLE BALES
The Astorian

If you’ve seen the 1986 sci-fi film “Aliens,” you know the scene: A crew member recovers from an attack by an unknown creature, sits down for dinner with his crew, begins convulsing and suddenly a small, needle-toothed alien bursts out of his chest.

That’s what Loretta Maxwell’s cough felt like.

“The second stage of coughing was so painful, and my upper chest felt as though it was going to explode,” she said. “The image of the alien bursting out of someone’s chest came to mind several times.”

Maxwell, who runs the Grandview Bed & Breakfast in Astoria, started to feel sick in mid-March. At the time, the Clatsop County Public Health Department was posting regular updates about the coronavirus, assuring people that no cases had been reported yet.

“Because of the postings of ‘zero cases in Clatsop,’ it didn’t occur to me that I might have COVID-19,” Maxwell said.

The first positive case was reported on March 23. Four people have tested positive as of Friday morning, but a lack of testing means the true picture of the spread of the disease on the North Coast might be obscured.

The Oregon Health Authority tracked 145 test results in Clatsop County as of Friday, including the four positive cases.

Several people have told The Astorian they believe they have been sick with COVID-19 but were unable to get tested.

Maxwell went to the emergency room after three days of body aches, coughing and difficulty sleeping. She thought maybe she was dealing with a particularly nasty bout of the flu.

According to the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, symptoms of the virus include fever, coughing and shortness of breath. Emergency warning signs include persistent pain or pressure in the chest and trouble breathing.

Maxwell still isn’t sure exactly what she has.

Her symptoms and the way the illness has played out so far lead her to believe



Hailey Hoffman/The Astorian
Cooper, 2, Sami, 7, and C.J., 6, hang out the window of their Astoria home with their parents, Charles and Faylene Taylor.

she has COVID-19, but after listening to Maxwell’s lungs, the doctor who checked her at the emergency room visit in March said they were “clear.” No test for the coronavirus was administered. Still, the paperwork Maxwell took home from the visit listed the virus as a possibility.

She has isolated herself to be safe, concerned about passing along something to her elderly mother.

“For the most part I’m still acting like I have the cooties,” she said. “Someone said that I should stay in hibernation for two weeks after the last of this has passed.”

She plans to call Columbia Memorial Hospital’s hotline for further guidance and has been in touch with her doctor’s office.

Maxwell was initially astounded that she did not get tested for COVID-19, but the more she thinks about it, the more she is frustrated.

“I wanted them to alter the language to say that there were/are other unknown cases,” she said of the county. “People reacted to the first confirmed case like a mad mob: Where was the person? Who was it? Where have they been?”

“By posting ‘no cases,’ people in general thought, ‘Oh, good, it’s not here yet.’ But it really was here and has been here for quite a while. I know of several others who have been affected.”

“People should just act like everyone has it, including themselves,” she said. “Stay home as much as possible. Keep your distance from others. I just hope no one got it from me.”

‘What are we going to do with the kids?’

Faylene Taylor’s symptoms also surfaced in mid-March. She started getting persistent headaches and soon had a sore throat and cough.

When she developed a fever that peaked at 103 degrees, she went to the CMH Primary Care Clinic in Warrenton and was tested for the flu.

Taylor said when the test came back negative, she was told it was a virus, but she could not be tested for COVID-19 because tests were being reserved for patients with severe symptoms.

She said she was advised to self-quarantine at home for two weeks just in case it was COVID-19, and was given a doctor’s note for work.

“And so I went to my car and I sat in the parking lot and cried for like half an hour before I called my husband to tell him, ‘What are we going to do with the kids?’” Taylor said.

“Before I got home, he sent all the kids over to our friend’s house that lives a couple doors down so that he could get the house clean and disinfect it. And then they kept C.J., our 6 year old, for like eight days because they were all healthy over there, just in case I did have it. Because if he was to get it he wouldn’t have made it.”

Taylor said her son is at risk because he has severe asthma and is a carrier of cystic fibrosis, a hereditary disease that affects the lungs and digestive system.

“I was super emotional because all I could think

about was if I did have it and I brought it home and my son did get it, it would be my fault that he was going to get it and he was going to die — that’s all I could think about,” she said.

Taylor spent the next few weeks isolated in her bedroom. She said she only came out to walk across the house to use the bathroom.

Her husband would put the children into the spare bedroom and walk behind her with gloves and a mask and disinfect everything she touched before bringing the children back out.

She said her husband is disabled, so it was hard on him to take care of their three sons on his own.

“I think that was the hardest because I couldn’t be around any of the kids,” Taylor said. “Our 2 year old, who doesn’t understand, would sit at the door and pound on the door and scream and cry, ‘Mommy,’ because he knew I was in there.”

Finally tested

Taylor is a residential counselor at the crisis respite center in Warrenton, which is operated by Clatsop Behavioral Healthcare, the county’s mental health contractor. After other employees became ill, the agency initiated testing for the coronavirus.

Taylor was tested on Tuesday. On Thursday, she was informed she tested negative for COVID-19.

She said she is thankful her children were not exposed. But not being able to get tested sooner took a toll on her and her family.

She plans to return to work.

“I’m excited because I have cabin fever and this has really amped up my anxiety and depression already ... I’m having a hard time sleeping and just getting out of bed,” Taylor said. “So I’m excited to get back to work and do what I love and help people. But, at the same time, I’m going to be back in the community and exposed again.”

Amy Baker, the executive director of Clatsop Behavioral Healthcare, said she initiated testing in an abundance of caution.

“Like all organizations right now, we’re really trying to protect our employees’ health,” she said. “We’re doing as much as we can to do more virtual and remote services so that our clients can kind of rest assured that we’re taking this situation very seriously.”

Unemployment claims spike amid virus

Service sector hardest hit

By EDWARD STRATTON
The Astorian

During a typical week this year, between 25 and 55 people in Clatsop County applied for unemployment insurance.

In the last couple of weeks of March, as coronavirus-driven layoffs disrupted the economy, more than 1,000 people in the county applied for benefits.

Around 10 million Americans have filed unemployment claims over the last two

weeks, according to the U.S. Department of Labor. Oregon employment offices have received nearly 170,000 initial unemployment claims in the same time period. Of the nearly 46,000 processed, one-third are in leisure and hospitality.

The number of initial claims received in the county jumped from 28 the week of March 14 to 340 the week of March 21 and added another 713 in the week ending March 28.

Nearly two-thirds of unemployment claims in the county were filed by workers in hospitality and food ser-

vices, which make up around 25% of the county’s workforce. More than a tenth of the unemployment claims were retail workers.

Shawna Sykes, a regional workforce analyst with the Oregon Employment Department, estimates nearly 88% of jobs in dining and hospitality have been impacted since Gov. Kate Brown made all bars and restaurants to-go only to protect against the spread of the virus. All non-essential retail has also taken a nosedive from people heading orders to hunker down during the crisis, she said.

“People are only getting the essentials right now,” Sykes said. “We’ve seen that surge in employment in food and grocery related retail, but other retail is suffering. Basically, everything else that’s not essential right now.”

Hotels and other lodgings have seen bookings plummet as public health officials advise visitors to stay home. Local governments on the North Coast, except Seaside, banned short-term stays for all but essential workers to keep tourists away.

“Lodging facilities like hotels and motels have reduced their staff to skeleton crews,” Sykes said. “Arts, entertainment and recreation businesses have reduced staff or closed down.”

More than 6.5% of the claims were by health care and social workers. Columbia Memorial Hospital in Astoria recently announced the layoffs of around 90 people in response to government restrictions on non-emergency procedures to

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