

Cases: ‘Our county health department has been just stretched to the max’

Continued from Page A1

He said all employees who had direct contact with the employee were placed on 14-day quarantine.

“As a safety precaution, our Astoria location will be closed for an undetermined amount of time while we do a thorough deep cleaning and sanitizing of the entire building,” Nelson wrote. “We will be in close communication with local health authorities and will be following all of their advice and instructions on how to move forward.”

Nelson said he was advised that due to the safety protocols the store has in place, the likelihood the virus spread is “extremely low.”

The new cases were among several that surfaced in Clatsop County over the past few days.

On Monday, the county reported three cases involving people living in the northern part of the county. The three include a woman in her 20s who tested positive, as well as two presumptive cases, both men in their 20s.

The presumptive cases involve people who are close or household contacts of a confirmed case who have coronavirus symptoms, but have yet to be tested or are waiting for test results.

All three were quarantined at home.

On Saturday, the county reported that two women living in the northern part of the county tested positive.

itive. The women are in their 30s and were reportedly quarantined at home.

The county did not provide any other details about the new cases, so it was not immediately clear if any reflect the park district worker or the cannabis store employee.

Clatsop County has disclosed 52 confirmed cases and two presumptive cases since March 23. Forty-six have recovered and the others are convalescing at home, according to the county.

The Oregon Health Authority reported 10,395 cases and 215 deaths statewide as of Monday morning.

“We anticipate this is the beginning of issues that we’re going to be seeing coming up,” Michael McNickle, the county’s public health director, said. “So, our team is ready to go.”

County Commissioner Mark Kujala recognized the efforts of the county Public Health Department during what he described as “an exhausting four months.” He praised the work of McNickle and Ellen Heinitz, a naturopathic physician who serves as the county’s community health project manager.

“Our county health department has been just stretched to the max here, working as hard as they can on multiple different venues in areas with regards to COVID,” Kujala said. “It’s just been amazing what they’ve been able to accomplish.”



Fireworks over the Columbia River in Astoria on the Fourth of July.

Linh DePledge/For The Astorian

Fireworks: ‘Astorians are craving a sense of normalcy in their lives’

Continued from Page A1

Columbia River on the condition that it be kept secret until an hour before the blasts.

If word got out sooner, the city was concerned people from across the region would converge on Astoria and create a potential health risk. Fireworks displays that usually draw thousands to Seaside and Long Beach, Washington, were canceled because of the virus.

“I just kept thinking, we need a celebration on the Fourth of July,” Dorn said. “How do we get around it?”

The solution was to stage what he called “a spontaneous, pop-up show. No prior advertising or announcement.”

The fireworks were set off at 10 p.m. from a barge

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Bruce Jones | Astoria mayor

650 feet from the two U.S. Coast Guard cutters at the 17th Street Dock near the Columbia River Maritime Museum.

Several local and regional businesses helped cover the estimated \$20,000 cost of the show. Along with doing something nice and patriotic for residents, Dorn said, part of the motivation was to help Western Display Fireworks, a Canby company that has taken a

financial blow because so many fireworks shows in the Pacific Northwest were canceled.

The private display was planned before Gov. Kate Brown issued a mask requirement at indoor public spaces across Oregon and urged people to celebrate the holiday with small gatherings because of a spike in virus cases.

Astoria Mayor Bruce Jones said he consulted with

the police chief, the fire chief and others on safety and reached out to the state to ensure the city wasn’t seen as defying the government’s restrictions on large public gatherings.

The mayor thanked Dorn and the other sponsors for their generosity.

“Independence Day is traditionally a day of family, friends and celebration,” Jones said in an email before the show. “With the cancellation of all of our traditional celebrations and gatherings these past several months, Astorians are craving a sense of normalcy in their lives and some kind of safe summer excitement.

“I hope this privately funded Independence Day fireworks display provides smiles and thrills at a time when we all need it.”

Ranch: Pumpkin patch with hayrides planned

Continued from Page A1

want people to realize, it can be gone at any moment — you never know.”

Mattson, a single mother, moved back to the peninsula from Bend in 2019 to be with family after Rhett was born. She said she had tried to get pregnant through a clinic for years.

“I didn’t think I was going to have one, and I gave up and all of a sudden there was Rhett,” she said.

She started working at Columbia Memorial Hospital in Astoria as a clinic manager, and was driving home from work when her mother called to tell her that emergency crews were taking Rhett to the hospital.

After Rhett died, Mattson said employees at Columbia Memorial donated three months in paid time off to her so she could take extra time to heal.

“They were a huge support,” she said. “And I don’t even know all of them.”

However, “being there, there’s going to be more triggers than there are here,” she said when explaining why she decided to leave her job in June.

Working on the ranch is encouraging, she said, and brings her joy as she finds her new normal.

“I absolutely love children,” she said. “If I can make kids smile, that’s what I want to do.”

Rhett loved anything with tires, Mattson explained, and was happy riding on the John Deere tractor and lawn mower with his grandfather.

“Hence the gigantic tires and things we have out here,” Mattson said, pointing to play structures around the ranch.

Her son also loved animals, she said, and petting the dogs, goats and horses. There are four miniature ponies, two miniature donkeys, two goats and a calf at the ranch. There is also a plan in the works to add a chinchilla.

She hopes to have pic-

nic tables and speakers set up for events, along with the sand pit, giant Jenga, checkers, tic-tac-toe and other activities.

Her deadline is approaching to get the ranch ready in time for a cornhole tournament planned for the weekend of Aug. 15 — the first major community event planned for the ranch.

She said she has had overwhelming support from the community and from her boyfriend, family and friends.

She is also planning an October pumpkin patch with hayrides and “spooky forest

adventure” ride at dusk.

In December, she is planning a scheduled time with Santa at the ranch with a hayride to ‘Mrs. Claus’ where children can visit, drink hot chocolate and listen to stories.

Along with holiday events, Mattson would like to open the ranch to private parties. She has even spoken with assisted living facilities and occupational therapists who would like to organize trips with patients.

“(Rhett) is the one that’s guided me to this,” she said. “I would have never had this idea without him.”

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