

## CORONAVIRUS



Christina Zamora, left, and Piper Ramos stand behind the bar at Merry Time Bar and Grill in Astoria. Photos by Hailey Hoffman/The Astorian

## Wauna Mill discloses virus case

By NICOLE BALES  
The Astorian

The Georgia-Pacific Wauna Mill has disclosed that an employee tested positive for the coronavirus.

The company, the largest employer in Clatsop County, said it was notified on Tuesday night of the positive test result. The company said the employee had exposure to the virus outside of the mill.

“As soon as the team member let us know that they have tested positive for COVID-19, we immediately started our emergency response protocol,” said Kristi Ward, a company spokeswoman. “This included shutting down the area the team member worked in ... we had a cleaning company sanitize the area, and then we performed contact tracing and worked to support the team members impacted by this.”

Ward said there was only one employee identified as a close contact, and that employee has tested negative for the virus. However, out of an abundance of caution, she said the company asked that employee to remain off-site for 14 days.

“We’re proud of our team members, how they safely and responsibly implemented a shutdown of our east side operations and paper machines so that we could respond to the positive test,” Ward said. “Doing that is not an easy task, and they’re professionals and did what needed to be done so that we maintain a healthy and safe workplace.”

“In addition, our plant emergency responders — who are trained emergency medical responders — they’ve done a phenomenal job these past months helping to assess employees and clean work areas as a precaution if a team member fell ill.”

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## Mask mandate takes root

Police use education and warnings instead of citations

By KATIE FRANKOWICZ  
The Astorian

And just like that, suddenly it seemed like everyone was walking around with face masks.

A family paused in front of Purple Cow Toys on Commercial Street to figure out who was going inside. One boy adjusted the disposable mask his mother fished out of her purse. Several blocks down, a man pulled a red bandanna that was loosely tied around his neck up and over his nose before he stepped up to order food at Busu’s takeout window on 11th Street.

Friends sitting outside Reach Break Brewing on Duane Street kept their masks in place throughout their visit, except to quickly sip the beer brought to them by a server who remained masked for her entire shift. Inside Safeway one morning, customers were masked and most kept their distance from each other; one man wandered the aisles with his mask pulled down from his face.

It has been just over a week since Gov. Kate Brown’s mandate requiring people in Oregon to wear masks in indoor public spaces to contain the spread of the coronavirus. Health experts say masks are an important preventative measure, but, like many aspects of the pandemic, the guidance has become politicized.

For many businesses in Astoria, the state requirement removed a burden from their shoulders as the economy reopened and the North Coast once again filled up with visitors.

Ahead of the July 1 mandate, a number of downtown businesses had already asked customers to don masks before entering stores, to mixed results. Some — like the Astoria Co+op — required it. Now, they have taken down the personal pleas taped to their doors and replaced them with



Customers wear masks while waiting for food outside the Astoria Coffeehouse and Bistro.



Purple Cow Toys, like other businesses, requires masks for entry and is limiting capacity.

variations of “Masks required by state order.”

Lisa Reid, the owner of Lucy’s Books, was among those who had asked customers to wear masks. Before July 1, customers sometimes breezed past her sign and she’d have to call a reminder from behind the clear plastic divider installed in front of the register. Now, customers enter with their masks already in place.

“It was like, OK, this is what we do now,” Reid said.

But there has been pushback against

wearing masks, with some people contending that the mandate impinges on their personal freedom. Masks are also not always readily available to everyone, especially those with limited resources.

Filling Empty Bellies, an Astoria nonprofit that provides lunches six days a week to the homeless, as well as other services, has distributed masks at mealtime. Some of the people they work with said they were kicked off of buses when the mask mandate first went into effect, said Erin Carlsen, the nonprofit’s director.

“Like with the rest of the population, some wear (the masks) and believe they are effective, and others don’t,” Carlsen said. “My observation is that most have one that they’ve been using over and over to get into places and stores.”

Clatsop County and local partners distributed more than 22,000 masks for free in June and plan to do so again next week at locations around the county. The KN95 masks are provided by the state for distribution where they are most needed, according to county officials.

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## Gospel tent gathering planned amid virus restrictions

Some residents worried about risk

By KATIE FRANKOWICZ  
The Astorian

One of Astoria’s newest churches is staging a weeklong, old-fashioned gospel tent meeting, the first big local event since the coronavirus pandemic shut down most gatherings in March.

Organized by Anchor Baptist Church, the tent meeting off W. Marine Drive will feature pastors from across Oregon and Washington state. Some residents who received postcards about the meeting in the mail have raised concerns with the city about the possible spread of the virus.

The event is scheduled to begin Sunday afternoon and run through July 19. The state has classified the tent organizers plan to use as an indoor facility, which would restrict attendance to 50 people under phase two of Gov. Kate Brown’s reopening guidelines.

The Oregon Health Authority on Friday recommended that people keep indoor social gatherings to less than 10 people after a surge in virus cases statewide.

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### A Coronavirus Snapshot

March



April



May



June



July



55

Confirmed and presumptive cases

Clatsop County surpassed 50 reported cases of COVID-19 in July, a local milestone in the global pandemic. Few of the cases involved hospitalization. No deaths have been reported.



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