

Census: Oregon leaders want original deadline restored

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The census is required by the U.S. Constitution every 10 years. The data is used to draw seats in Congress and influences how federal money is distributed for a range of social service programs, including rural business development, housing, schools, health care and emergency preparedness.

About 67% percent of households in Oregon and 53% in Clatsop County have responded to the census, according to data provided by the Census Bureau, which is on par with the final 2010 response.

More than 67% of households in Astoria and more than 61% in Warrenton have responded. However, the response rate in Seaside is about 45% and Gearhart is about 34%. In Cannon Beach, only about 13% of households have responded.

The percentages reflect households that self-respond. Census takers are also going door to door to reach people.

Misty Slater, the Census Bureau’s media specialist for Oregon, said it is often difficult to count people living in rural areas, since cen-



Hailey Hoffman/The Astorian
Consejo Hispano is helping with the census in Clatsop County.

sus forms are not mailed to post office boxes. Poor internet access may also prevent households from responding online.

She said census forms sent to vacation rentals or second homes still need to be completed by indicating that no one lives there.

“Our job is to get everybody in the country the opportunity to respond,” Slater said. “And this is ... our last final push for them to respond to us, to give us the information that we need to do a complete and accurate count.”

Outreach
Census Assistance Cen-

ters, located in nonprofits and public agencies throughout the state, are also reaching out to hard-to-count communities.

Consejo Hispano, an Astoria nonprofit that serves the Hispanic community on the Oregon Coast and southwest Washington, is the official center in Clatsop County.

Adriana Caron, the nonprofit’s census specialist, has been utilizing social media, virtual meetings and phone calls after planned outreach events were canceled over the virus.

“We want everyone to be counted,” Caron said. “Part of the Census Assistance

Center piece, is to make sure that people with language or literacy or technology (barriers) — whatever kind of barriers they might have — we want to make sure that they get counted.

“It’s harder to get to certain people, just to get the word out or to let them know that we are available. But as soon as we have that connection it’s been fairly smooth getting people what they need in the language they need.”

Caron said one of the most common questions she receives is if the information solicited on the form — a person’s name, address, birthdate, race and gender — will stay safe and confidential.

She said when she explains that the Census Bureau is prohibited from releasing any information that can identify an individual or business, people tend to feel more comfortable.

Consejo Hispano has helped more than 60 households complete the census and more than 400 people have indicated that they plan to complete the form, Caron said.

She said the nonprofit has been trying to quickly reach

as many people as possible while working under virus restrictions.

Deadline
Oregon leaders have joined other states in calling on the U.S. Department of Commerce and the Census Bureau to restore the original census deadline.

Gov. Kate Brown said in a statement Tuesday that she is concerned the new deadline will not give key partners enough time for outreach.

“These communities are already being disproportionately affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and not providing them enough time to complete their 2020 census would be denying them valuable resources needed for their recovery from this crisis,” the governor said.

“In Oregon, nearly 1.3 million people are considered hard to count, and we’ve been working diligently over the last 20 months with a multitude of partners across the state and across sectors to ensure a fair, accurate and complete count for Oregon.

“The decennial census is the foundation of our democracy and tells the story of who we are and where we are going as a nation. Federal funding for essential services and congressional representation is on the line, and it is crucial that we achieve a complete and accurate count.”

Oregon U.S. Sen. Jeff Merkley and U.S. Sen. Ron Wyden joined 17 senators in signing a letter Friday urging the Census Bureau to honor the original timeline.

The senators said, “the accelerated timeline, combined with the low response rate and the widespread lack of internet access, threatens to result in another severe undercount of American Indians, Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian communities.”

Native leaders have spent months coordinating with the Census Bureau to meet the original deadline, the senators said, adding that their “herculean efforts to get out the count even during a pandemic should not be discounted or cut short.”

Mudge: Departure will leave a big hole in the community

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and Clark Bicentennial Association. She stayed on to take over as the Astoria Sunday Market’s director in 2008.

Though the Seattle native had a background in marketing and promotion, the market was a huge shift. Mudge was used to the grind of planning multiple-day or weeklong events and conferences. The market, which spans three blocks of 12th Street between Commercial and Exchange streets and two parking lots downtown and includes live music and a food court, was more like putting on a festival every Sunday.

The market usually runs from Mother’s Day in May through the second Sunday in October.

Mudge remembered thinking when she first started, “Boy, I could do this for maybe three years.”

“I had no idea I was going to do it as long as I did,” she said. “I got used to the grind.”

She credits the previous director, Joyce Compere, with building the market up into the large event Mudge took over more than a decade ago.

Mudge also runs Clatsop Cruise Hosts. Though she is selling her house and moving to Washington state, she told both the host and market boards, “You don’t know what you’re facing next year. None of us do. I’m not that far. I’ll certainly be around to help.”

David Reid, the executive director of the Astoria-Warrenton Area Chamber of Commerce, met Mudge when she was helping organize the Lewis and Clark Bicentennial.

“She handled that professionally and with a lot of enthusiasm, and ever since then it’s been one thing after



The Astoria Sunday Market is a popular draw.

another she’s taken on her shoulders,” he said. “She’s tireless.”

Her departure will leave a big hole in the community, he said, and then corrected himself: “A bunch of big holes in our community.”

Besides helping to organize local and regional celebrations and festivals, Mudge has taken the lead on Astoria Rotary Club projects in addition to the Astoria Sunday Market. She also helps run the Saturday Market in Ilwaco, Washington.

Mudge recently came under fire for a comment she made on Facebook in support of Patriot Prayer, a far-right group active in the Portland area that has attracted some violent and racist followers. In her comment, Mudge said she thought the group had been “wrongfully maligned by the press. Good group.”

The comment triggered a slew of upset responses from some in the community. Some reached out to the market’s board of directors, as well as Mayor Bruce Jones, with their concerns about Mudge’s comment. Mudge later posted an apology.

“I regret any misconception I’ve created through

comments on Facebook,” she wrote. “I do not support hate or discrimination in any way and have spent a lifetime striving always to treat people fairly and justly.”

The market’s board of directors discussed the incident, and one board member decided to step down. Board treasurer Greg Cross said the incident was “an attention-getter,” and has resulted in clarifications to the board’s policies and expectations for social media posts for future market personnel.

But the incident did not result in any changes to Mudge’s employment. Nor was it a factor in Mudge’s decision to step down from the job.

“A lot of things were already pushing me in that direction,” she told The Astorian. “I apologized because I would never ever want to bring any harm to the board or the organization or frankly to the community. I was the caretaker, but the market really belongs to the community.”

Still, it was another moment that made her think it may be time to move on.

“We live in a cancel culture right now,” she said. “Hardly anyone can say or

do anything without worrying, ‘OK, is someone going to accuse me of something?’”

Social media can be one dimensional and it is easy to misinterpret someone’s intentions, she added. “From that standpoint, it’s hard no matter what job you’re in to be on social media right now,” she said.

‘A good run’

The Astoria Sunday Market board plans to recruit and hire a new director this fall and is considering other changes to the market that are still in development.

“I think Cyndi did a great job and we’re going to miss her,” Cross said. “She had that passion for the market. She loved to watch it succeed and grow.”

But, he added, they have high hopes for a quality replacement who can further expand what Mudge built.

For now, Mudge is looking forward to returning to Astoria — this time as a visitor.

“It’s been a good run,” she said. “I’m actually kind of looking forward to coming back and enjoying things I wasn’t kind of able to because my entire summer was booked up with the market.”

Education: Schools are perfecting distance learning

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Students who are learning English as a second language and students involved in career and technical education will also get priority.

While in-person instruction is preferred, schools are also perfecting distance learning.

Last spring, when schools closed because of the pandemic, educators had to quickly develop distance learning models.

In Astoria and Warrenton, for example, schools sent work home to students in packets, including modified packets for students in special education.

“In a brick-and-mortar setting, that student wouldn’t receive so much work at once,” said Travis Roe, the

director of special programs for the Astoria School District. “For many students supported by special education, the packets were overwhelming.”

The new state guidelines are intended to help special education students follow their Individualized Education Plan, a set of goals that include educational, behavioral and social targets.

“There were some goals based on an individual level that were not able to be addressed,” Roe said of distance learning in the spring.

Teachers and parents had to be creative and find ways for special education students to meet goals in a home setting.

“The success that we had came from parents doing their best and teachers really

being creative with how IEP goals were addressed,” Roe said.

Students and families also had to cope with the sudden separation from trusted staff, changes in routine and parents who had to take on new roles.

In the fall, the Astoria School District plans to address some of these challenges with a new online format intended to be easier for parents and students to navigate.

An online platform that is universally accessible will

allow teachers to modify lessons and adjust curriculum. It will also allow teachers to give direct feedback to students.

“It’s a platform, it’s not necessarily a canned curriculum,” Roe said.

Roe hopes the platform will open up accessibility and benefit students by meeting their needs and providing stronger connections to teachers.

“There are very individual needs, strengths and experiences that families had,” Roe said. “It’s a wide range.”

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