

Day care center: Care is expected to resume on Sept. 11

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The city expects an interruption to child care beginning on Sept. 7 in order to move items from Gray School to the recreation center. Care will resume on Sept. 11.

Enrollment is expected to stay at around 42 children for now, said Jonah Dart-McLean, the city’s parks director. Class sizes are restricted due to coronavirus precautions and the city is still providing emergency child care slots to essential workers.

But when the recreation center is built out with additional classrooms, Dart-McLean said it is possible Lil’ Sprouts could eventually host up to 75 or 80 children, an increase over precoronavirus capacity. Any increase would depend on public health restrictions and the number of available staff, however.

In the short term, Dart-McLean hopes to be able to start bringing back families who were bumped onto waiting lists due to virus-related class-size restrictions.

There were several reasons behind the move, according to Dart-McLean.

“One, it’s nice to be able to have a building we’re in complete control of,” he said.

The city had been renting space at Gray School from the school district. Lil’ Sprouts shared space with district administrative offices and an alternative high school.

Also, Dart-McLean added, as the school district began to solidify plans for how to conduct school business and oversee a school year that will begin entirely online, “It became clear that one thing they could use was to have more space, to operate with options.”

Fitness equipment previously housed at the recreation center was moved to the Astoria Aquatic Center, which has amenities like showers to offer. Dart-McLean hopes to bring back the after-school programs, though where and how is not clear yet.

Columbia Memorial Hospital donated \$10,000 to offset some of the costs of building out the recreation center to accommodate day care operations.

The parks department was able to fund the majority of the work through its own budget, drawing on in-house labor and construction supplies and materials, Dart-McLean said. The money from the hospital will help pay for more technical work like plumbing and electrical, he said.

Rosebriar: Cats, ‘Rose’ and ‘Briar’ help manage rodents

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The treatment center operated until just over two years ago, when Sunspire Health abruptly closed without explanation. Other treatment providers toyed with the possibility of taking over the turnkey operation, but nobody ever reopened, and the Rosebriar hit the market.

The Dooner family still owns Astoria Pointe, which Pacific Seafood hopes to convert to an 80-bed dormitory for seasonal workers at its Warrenton plant. The dorms, approved by the Astoria Planning Commission and appealed by neighbors worried about the impact on livability, go before the City Council in October.

The Citovics relocated from Chicago to Portland a decade ago. In 2018, they came to Astoria with their two children after the eldest, Alina, was diagnosed with spinal muscular atrophy. The couple wanted the smaller schools and family support network.

“With the kids’ needs, we thought it was just the right time to get out of the city,” Djordje Citovic said.

Trudy works in her family’s business, Van Dusen Beverages, and Djordje runs their Airbnb rental in Portland. They helped start Fire Station Yoga in the Uppertown Firefighters Museum and were looking for a local investment. They were under contract to buy the Rosebriar when the coronavirus pandemic hit the North Coast.

“We ended up losing our earnest money and backing



Photos by Hailey Hoffman/The Astorian
Djordje Citovic stands next to a window with an ornate ‘R’ and ‘H’ from the building’s past as a hotel. The window also has a direct view of the former school building at St. Mary, Star of the Sea, where the nuns who once resided in the Rosebriar worked.



Trudy Citovic shows a photo of her family on the stairs of the Rosebriar after her father, Willis Van Dusen, and stepmother married in the 1990s.

Representatives for the Dooner family called the Citovics in July, ready to make a deal, they said. The Citovics closed on the property through their company, Rosebriaire. With building contractors busier than ever, Djordje Citovic has been doing most of the work refurbishing the Rosebriar into a bed-and-breakfast.

“We can actually kind of divide the place, where it’s almost like a duplex, like two totally separate living spaces, separate entrances, separate everything,” he said.

The couple’s vision is to rent the back half of the house, the former convent dorms added on and the carriage house to larger traveling groups within coronavirus gathering limits, with the

convent’s former chapel and backyard as group gathering places. The property comes with a walking path that cuts uphill, formerly used by nuns walking to and from the Catholic school.

They bought two cats, “Rose” and “Briar,” to help manage rodents.

For Trudy Citovic, the move is a dream come true, returning home after moving around the country to raise her family and help restart a historic property.

“Coming back, I have a new sense of respect for the community and knowing that it’s not just something you can recreate,” she said. “You can’t recreate generations of friendships, you know, multigenerational. It’s the place that I want to raise my family.”



Edward Stratton/The Astorian
The partners behind the restoration of the Odd Fellows Building in Astoria hired local contractor Simo Ranta to apply a new coat of paint.

Color: Painting should be finished in October

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been happening, we’ve been, like so many renovation endeavors, pretty over budget, because we’re just choosing not to cut any corners,” West said. “And so being able to get the paint donated is literally what is going to help us cross the finish line for this phase of the historic restoration.”

The partners hired local contractor Simo Ranta to paint the building over the next month and finish in October before the rainy season. They are contemplating a shade of white for the body of the building, with dark trim.

Mazzarella said the partners have been working with Benjamin Moore to nail down a color scheme that shows off all the architectural features of the building without making it look like a birthday cake. In working on the building, she has been finding previous bright layers of paint from a periwinkle and lavender

to frosty green and baby pink.

The next step of the restoration is replacing the building’s roof and refurbishing the basement for more studio space. The partnership hopes to have the building completely renovated by its centennial in 2023.

The building recently lost one of the main tenants, Downtown Coffee Shop. But Mazzarella is partnering with local chef Wade Padgett and Kendall Padgett-McEuen to open a to-go focused lunch, juice and coffee spot utilizing organic produce sourced from her parents’ and other local farms.

“We’re calling it The Green Door Cafe — eventually we’ll paint the door green, so it will make sense,” Mazzarella said. “When I was fixing up the space, I just kept picturing the inside of the cafe being bright and green and full of life and plants, and I just wanted it to feel really alive and warm in there.”

Beach party could be linked to more than 300 virus cases

By AMELIA TEMPLETON
Oregon Public Broadcasting

This summer, 20 friends rented a beach house on the Oregon Coast for a three-day celebration. Nobody felt sick at the time.

But four of the friends were likely infected with coronavirus and silently spreading it.

Twelve people in the group eventually got sick — but only after they’d first returned to work, unwittingly spreading the virus further.

“They have been linked to five workplace outbreaks, with a total of more than 300 cases so far,” said Dean Sidelinger, the state’s epidemiologist.

He declined to specify where and when the beach party took place.

Sidelinger shared the anecdote as he announced significant progress slowing the spread of COVID-19 statewide. At the same time, he implored Oregonians to stay committed to wearing masks when they are outside of their homes, to limit in person gatherings and to wash their hands frequently.

State officials are making the case that Oregonians must continue to limit their social gatherings to reduce transmission of the virus to a point where schools can reopen.

After climbing steadily earlier in the summer, new cases of the coronavirus in Oregon have fallen for three weeks in a row, and the number of people hospitalized with the virus is also falling. The state’s testing positivity rate, a key indicator of how widespread infection is, has declined to 5.1%.

Schools can begin to reopen in counties with low rates of the coronavirus when Oregon’s statewide positivity rate falls below 5% for three weeks in a row.

For most counties, the metric to allow schools to reopen is fewer than 10 cases per 100,000 residents. About a third of Oregon’s counties have hit that metric this week. Clatsop County is one of 15 counties that have met the metric.

“We’re headed in the right direction, but we need to keep the pressure on to further slow the spread of the virus,” Patrick Allen, direc-

tor of the Oregon Health Authority, said.

Allen asked people to rethink any gatherings they have planned for the upcoming Labor Day weekend. Indoor social gatherings of more than 10 people are currently banned statewide.

“If you have a small gathering, consider hosting it outdoors rather than indoors,” he said. “We cannot afford the setbacks after holidays.”

The state’s disease modeling suggests that on average, each Oregonian with coronavirus infects one other person.

While that represents a significant reduction in transmission of the virus, at that rate, Oregon’s number of cases of the virus will remain steady.

Sidelinger and Allen said they need the transmission rate to drop a little more — just 10% — to put the state on track to controlling the virus.

“To safely reopen schools, and protect the health and safety of those around us, we need to make sure that people who become infected are passing it along to fewer people,” Allen said.

OHSU ends virus study suspected of racial bias

By COURTNEY SHERWOOD
Oregon Public Broadcasting

A coronavirus study aimed at helping local leaders better track, test and map the spread of COVID-19 across the state ended Thursday after failing to enlist a diverse pool of participants.

Oregon Health & Science University’s Key to Oregon study began May 1, and was designed to enlist and monitor 100,000 Oregonians from across the state for coronavirus symptoms for one year.

In a press release, OHSU said more than 10,000 Oregonians enrolled, but the cohort of participants didn’t represent the state in a way that is necessary to address the disproportionate impact of the coronavirus on historically disadvantaged populations in the state.

The study was heavily criticized in June by organizations and health care experts in Black and Latino communities who said the study was flawed by racial biases. Critics found problems with OHSU’s outreach efforts to communities of color.

Later that month, OHSU said it would redesign its approach to the study after several community leaders wrote to OHSU detailing their concerns.

OHSU said it will now support ongoing conversations with the Oregon Health Authority, the governor’s office and communities of color to better understand disproportionate impacts of the coronavirus within those communities.

Bathrooms: Vandalism a consistent problem

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September through December. The increased cleaning services would be reimbursed by state coronavirus relief funds the city has been utilizing to cover staff time and other expenses such as laptops for people working from home.

“This opportunity for enhanced cleaning, for public health, is one of the categories under the Treasury guidelines that we can draw down on,” said Susan Brooks, the city’s finance director.

The state reimbursements only last until the end of the year. At that point, City Manager Brett Estes said, the city will need to take a look at how much tax revenue it’s taking in, whether the state will

extend virus relief and decide whether it wants to continue the enhanced cleaning.

The city had also hoped a state parks grant it applied for would help pay for a new Portland Loo-style bathroom on the Riverwalk to provide more options while cutting down on vandalism. But with the state lottery funds that back the grants plummeting amid the pandemic, new projects have been postponed, Dart-McLean said.

“They made the announcement in the spring and subsequently said, ‘Yeah, we’re very sorry, and we’ll continue to be looking at ways we can restart that program. But we don’t have a date at this time,’” he said.