

County reports 11 new virus cases

The Astorian

Clatsop County on Monday reported 11 new coronavirus cases.

The cases include a woman in her 20s, a man in his 30s, a man in his 40s and a man in his 70s living in the northern part of the county.

The others live in the southern part of the county and include two women in their 20s, a woman in her 30s, a man and woman in their 40s, a woman in her 50s and man in his 60s.

One of the new cases was hospitalized, according to the county, and the rest were recovering at home.

The county has recorded 343 cases since March. According to the county, five were hospitalized and one has died.

The Oregon Health Authority has reported 66,333 cases and 826 deaths from the virus statewide as of Monday morning.

The health authority tracked 8,350 test results in Clatsop County, including 335 of the positive cases.

The health authority announced Friday that it will change the way virus testing is tracked.

The state has been tracking the number of new people tested. People who tested negative were counted only

once, no matter how many negative test results they received.

The health authority will begin tracking the number of tests administered so that the state's testing capacity is more accurately represented.

The Chinook Observer reported that Pacific County, Washington, disclosed 94 new virus cases on Friday, pushing the case count to 340.

"We do not report these numbers to cause alarm, but rather to increase awareness of the surge and to remind people to take recommended safety precautions," Pacific County Public Health and Human Services said in a statement Friday night.

Mushrooms: Commercial harvest not allowed

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months when these particular fungi might be sending up fruiting bodies. Patrol cars could be seen idling in parking lots or cruising down the main roads through the park.

Unlike when recreational marijuana was legalized in Oregon in 2015, psilocybin won't be available at dispensaries, nor will people be allowed to cultivate the mushrooms in their homes.

The program instead will be overseen by the Oregon Health Authority — rather than the Oregon Liquor Control Commission, which oversees cannabis. Regulatory details will be developed over a two-year period.

Though now legal in Oregon in a limited sense, psilocybin, like cannabis, remains classified as a Schedule I drug under federal law.

Legality aside, seeking out psilocybin mushrooms is an activity people should approach with caution.

There are a number of little brown mushrooms growing in Fort Stevens and some of them are deadly. A layperson may not be able to distinguish between a mushroom that is magic and one that is mortal.

"With any mushroom, you should be 100% sure of your identification before you eat

it," said Dane Osis, a park ranger at Fort Stevens.

In a normal fall, Osis would be leading visitors on wild mushroom hikes, helping newcomers identify and better understand the fungal world. All of those hikes were canceled this year because of the coronavirus pandemic, but it has not dimmed foragers' enthusiasm.

Even on a stormy weekend at the beginning of November, people parked on the side of Jetty Road and in nearby parking lots and set out in search of mushrooms.

But parks have been especially busy this year as the pandemic continues to restrict activities.

"We're one of the last things people have for a sense of normalcy," Osis said.

Enforcing etiquette

State parks allow a liberal recreational picking limit. Visitors can fill a 1 gallon bucket a day, if they want — more than enough for a feast.

Commercial harvest is not allowed but it does happen. Sometimes vans will show up in parking lots at Fort Stevens filled with passengers. With large buckets in their hands, these people march search-party style through the woods and clear the ground of edible fungi.

"I'm sure they're out there, but it's not high on our priority list," Osis said.

The park is vast and enforcing mushroom-related rules is tricky. Besides, the resource itself — the mushrooms — are probably not being harmed.

"Even with the most intensive picking, the mushrooms are going to be fine," Osis said.

"(A mushroom's) whole mission in life is to produce spores," he said. As long as at least a few mature mushrooms remain standing and the habitat is still present, "you still have the mushroom," Osis said.

The increasing popularity of this type of foraging means some longtime local mushroom pickers might not have certain sites all to themselves anymore, he added.

Still, he says, people should be respectful of the resource.

Inexperienced pickers sometimes become overzealous in their explorations, seeming to knock over or pick every mushroom in their path while they try to find and identify edible varieties.

Studies have found it makes little difference to the persistence of mushrooms in a certain area whether people pull or cut mushrooms they harvest, but it's important not to rake the duff up while looking for prized culinary mushrooms

like matsutake. This can ruin the mushrooms and destroy the mycelium, the vegetative, thread-like part of the fungus that branches underground and produces mushrooms.

And, Osis said, "Just because you see a mushroom, you don't have to kick it over."

As people do come out to the parks, Osis echoed general park guidelines: Park in designated lots, not the side of the road. Don't litter.

As far as mushrooms go, don't overdo it: "Pick what you need for food or dinner," he said.

Mushroom picking can be a great and healthy way to enjoy the landscape, Havel said.

It "combines many of the things we love about the Oregon outdoors: enjoyment of native plants, stewardship of natural landscapes and active outdoor play," he said. "Plus, you get to see more salamanders, so ... bonus."

But it can lead to activities that hurt the landscape: people camping or parking in places not designed for those uses, he added.

"The other potential downside comes from inexperienced people heading out without good planning, which can lead to people getting lost or injured since all wild, natural lands come with risks," Havel said.

College: 'This level of drop isn't sustainable for us'

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The college has seen a dip in revenue from tuition and fees and lower enrollment as departments conduct the majority of classes online. Students appear to be putting their education on hold to deal with work and family issues.

Across the state, other community colleges reported similar declines. Recent enrollment data from Oregon's Higher Education Coordinating Commission show that the overall headcount of students dropped by 23% across the state's two-year institutions.

At Clatsop Community College, the drop was even more dramatic: Overall headcount is down by 75%, according to administrators.

But that number does not tell the full story, Breitmeyer said. Lack of enrollment in the college's many non-

credit community classes also affects the overall picture, he said. The college's main concern when it looks at enrollment figures is the number of full-time students. That number is down closer to about 30%, Breitmeyer said.

The college took steps early on to make up for possible budget shortfalls and Breitmeyer is confident the institution can weather coronavirus-related impacts in the short term.

Still, he added, "This level of drop isn't sustainable for us."

The college has seen the decline most among its older male students — men in their late 20s through 40s — enrolled in career technical education courses for subjects like welding or automotive.

"A lot of those are people that come back to us for retraining in those industries,

specifically in the maritime industry," Breitmeyer said.

The college is in the middle of an outreach effort to connect with students and better understand the barriers to continuing with their education. Early indications confirm what most would suspect given the specific pressures of the pandemic: Many people are trying to figure out how to juggle work with children who are doing much, if not all, of their schooling at home.

The college plans to continue refining the way it offers classes into the next term in light of these challenges. By the fall term, Breitmeyer hopes to see a rebound in student numbers. He said the college appears to be keeping the students it does have. Term-to-term persistence is up.

On the horizon are college board discussions about

what it means if online learning must continue to be the norm for the long term and what that means for everything from the student experience to the budget.

The college is in the middle of a program prioritization process, with departments filling out surveys about how much is spent on certain programs, the revenue those programs bring in and student engagement and community benefit among other questions. The process is essentially trying to answer the question of why a program exists. It is a process institutions often go through when they are under stress and looking to make cuts.

"I don't know that we're in that place now," Breitmeyer said. But if they do reach that point, he added, they'll be able to make measured and informed decisions.

Taylor: 'We can live a life that is not defined by what has happened to us'

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how it helps me and how it helps me make contact with the legacy and the gifts of our ancestors."

Larger narrative

Since Native American history has often been defined by genocide and turmoil, Taylor said there is a lot of emphasis on the unfair treatment of Native Americans. He said that narrative has become reality warping.

"I wanted this book to be saturated and overflowing with the medicine of the larger true narrative, which is our ancestors are still with us," he said. "We are carrying the gifts that Mother Earth has given to not only all of our tribal people and all indigenous people, but all human beings.

"And we can live a life that is not defined by what has happened to us. And that life can be beautiful, it can be full of happiness, it can be full of inspiration, it can be full of every kind of story, really, that in the innermost depths of your heart, you would hope to find your own life story containing when you get to the end of your life."

Growing up in Columbus, a small town named after Christopher Columbus, the Italian explorer and navigator, Taylor was curious about the history and influence Columbus had on American consciousness and character.

"Right from the get-go I got challenge No. 1, which was, how to discover yourself when you're kind of standing in this huge fiction of the man who supposedly discovered this continent that was just blazing with the cultures and civilizations and life, I think that the modern people are just not fully comprehending," Taylor said.

He said that like a lot of Native Americans, he did not grow up on a reservation and was away from his culture and experiencing depression in a broken home rife with drug and alcohol abuse.

Taylor began reading Kurt Vonnegut and Tom Robbins as a teenager and became passionate about the writing process, which he described as a cathartic experience.

He moved to Lincoln, Nebraska, in his late teens, where he said he had the "stupendous luck of stumbling into my people's ways, our culture, our ceremonies."

He spent time with elders who helped him untangle and gain clarity around his feelings and experiences.

"While I was in the midst of them, you figure that they're yours — all sorts of anger, all sorts of depression, all sorts of self-hate," Taylor

said. "But you kind of get more schooled on the situation that we as human beings are born into, and you realize, a lot of this stuff that you find yourself grappling with was kind of here before you. And we were born into a story that we find ourselves deciding, how do we want to influence, how do we want to contribute to it, how do we want to add to it?"

Spending time with elders

He said he fell in love with spending time with the elders, participating in ceremonies and learning about the values cherished by Native Americans.

"And I felt like that's where culture should emanate from," he said. "That's where the kind of the personal guidebook for how we should live our lives should emanate from. And I just wanted to be close to it. I wanted to learn as much as I could from it.

"And you kind of turn around and you start peering back in time through the generations and you can see where this stuff comes from. And you understand you're inheriting this kind of unpacked, unhealed stuff that then manifests in almost very stereotypical ways that are just such utter cries for help.

"People don't throw their lives away to self-destructive behaviors because on some level they're not crying for something immensely tragic and unfortunate and unjust to be finally free and addressed by the community and the people who all in one way, shape or form ... are connected to it, too.

"So, I started piecing together like, 'Oh, this is what's going on.' And it's not just my family and it's not just this other Indian family or this other Indian family — it's an epidemic of grief over what has happened and what, for the most part, America has trained its citizens to either turn a blind eye to or to be blind to.

"Being around my culture, I just started unpacking and healing that stuff, as opposed to suffering from it and preparing it to be the package that was going to be handed down to the ones who came after me, whether they were my children or just my relatives of the next generation."

Taylor said "The Memory of Souls" is a micromemoir and sequel of sorts to "Special Dogs," the next memoir he hopes to publish. He said "Special Dogs" is a coming of age story about growing up in Columbus.

"My ultimate aspiration for what I write is that it will do for others what all the books I have loved have done for me," he said.

Ham: Tentatively set to take over on Jan. 1 in Enterprise

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Ham will take over for Joel Fish, who was elected sheriff for Wallowa County. Ham will lead a department of three full-time officers, significantly smaller than the Seaside Police Department's 20 full-time officers.

"It seems to be a really good department and very well received in the community," Ham said.

Ham, 50, was raised in Salem. He started his law enforcement career as a reserve officer in Independence and received his first paid police job in October 1995, when he joined Seaside police as a patrolman.

Ham worked as a narcotics detective on the county's drug task force from 2000 to 2001. He was promoted to sergeant in 2001, lieutenant in 2003 and named police chief in 2014 after the retirement of Bob Gross.

As chief, Ham stressed community policing, with outreach including National Night Out, child safety fairs, backpack food programs, Shop With a Cop and serving as a board member of Seaside Kiwanis.

In 2016, Ham guided the department after Sgt. Jason Goodding was fatally shot while trying to serve an arrest warrant.

Ham and Seaside officers

have held vigils for Goodding every year since his death.

This year, Ham has addressed evolving coronavirus restrictions, protests and counterprotests and a spike in the city's homeless population.

Ham said he and his wife, Cheryl, had discussed eastern or central Oregon as an eventual retirement location.

After seeing a notice in a newsletter from the Oregon Association Chiefs of Police, they started researching the area.

Ham is tentatively set to take over on Jan. 1 in Enterprise.

"One of the things that caught my eye is that they described the position as a 'working chief,'" Ham said.

He said he was impressed with the city's pride in their department and the chance to do more hands-on police work.

Seaside officials have yet to discuss a replacement, he said.

Lt. Guy Knight, Seaside police's second-in-command, would likely serve as the acting chief during the search for a replacement, he added.

While Ham will miss Seaside's crowds and year-round excitement, he is looking forward to his new role in Enterprise.

"They do have a summer influx of people coming through, but nowhere to the level we've experienced here in Seaside," he said. "A little bit of change doesn't hurt anybody."

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