

## IN BRIEF

## State discloses virus cases at local schools

The Oregon Health Authority has disclosed three new coronavirus cases at schools in Clatsop County.

All three cases were students from the Seaside School District, according to the health authority's weekly outbreak report.

Two cases were from Seaside High School, while one case was from Pacific Ridge Elementary.

On Thursday, the health authority reported 12 new virus cases in Clatsop County. The state also reported 16 virus cases for the county on Wednesday.

Since the pandemic began, the county had recorded 2,830 cases and 36 deaths as of Thursday.

## Neon sign returns at Custard King

The owners of Custard King have repaired the restaurant's iconic neon sign, relighting the landmark on Marine Drive after nearly two years of darkness.

The repair came from a recent Craft3 small-business loan that also helped Jamie Gerlitz and her daughter, Tara Gerlitz, acquire the property.

"It was nice to be able to get that (sign) up and running again," Jamie Gerlitz said.

Gerlitz said it will be business as usual for the custard and burger joint, though with a new shake machine. She takes pride in its made-from-scratch food menu.

"We wanted to keep the name alive, and hopefully it's a family business that we can pass on to the grandchildren," she said.

— *The Astorian*

## Ilwaco adopts consumer fireworks ban

ILWACO, Wash. — After months of discussion and debate, the Ilwaco City Council narrowly voted to adopt an outright ban on the sale and discharge of consumer fireworks at its meeting on Monday.

By a 3-2 vote, the council adopted an ordinance banning consumer fireworks. The vote came after rigorous discussion among councilors over the past several meetings that got heated at times. Councilors Missy Bageant, Dave Cundiff and Jonathan Quittner voted in favor of the ordinance, while councilors Matt Lessnau and Kristen Mathison voted to oppose the ordinance.

The ordinance, which will not go into effect until 2023 per existing state law, prohibits the sale, use, transfer, discharge, ignition or explosion of any fireworks within Ilwaco city limits — with the exception of authorized public displays, such as the annual fireworks show held at the Port of Ilwaco on the first Saturday in July.

— *Chinook Observer*

## Parts of Santiam State Forest to reopen after 2020 fires

The Oregon Department of Forestry will reopen 4,000 acres of the Santiam State Forest for the first time since the 2020 Labor Day wildfires.

The forestry department says on its website that post-fire road repairs, timber harvesting and hazard tree removal in this part of the forest are complete. The area was set to open on Saturday.

The area along Highway 22 near Niagara includes the popular Rocky Top Trail. Another well-known trail, Natural Arch, will remain closed.

Fires torched about a third of the 47,000-acre Santiam State Forest east of Salem in 2020. Portions of the forest spared from the worst of the Beachie Creek and Lionshead fires have already opened.

Even after Saturday's reopening, a large chunk of forest will remain closed to the public, with a projected reopening of next fall.

— *Oregon Public Broadcasting*

## DEATHS

Dec. 28, 2021

**PALMROSE**, Walter Vernon, 87, of Seaside, died in Seaside. Caldwell's Luce-Layton Mortuary of Astoria is in charge of the arrangements.

Dec. 20, 2021

**STAUF**, Harry William, 77, of Albany, formerly of Olney, died in Albany. Fisher Funeral Home of Albany is in charge of the arrangements.

## ON THE RECORD

## Assault

• Justin Thomas Peterson, 38, of Hammond, was indicted last week for assault in the fourth degree constituting domestic violence and harassment. The crimes are alleged to have occurred in June.

## PUBLIC MEETINGS

## MONDAY

**Astoria City Council**, 7 p.m., City Hall, 1095 Duane St.

## TUESDAY

**Clatsop County Fair Board**, 5:30 p.m., 92937 Walluski Loop, Astoria.

**Cannon Beach City Council**, 6 p.m., (electronic meeting).

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## FIRE AND SNOW



Luke Whittaker/Chinook Observer

Firefighters battled a blaze on the F/V Tlingit Princess on Sunday at the Ilwaco marina. No injuries were reported.

## County to end monoclonal antibody treatment against virus

By ERICK BENGEL  
*The Astorian*

Coronavirus patients will no longer be able to get monoclonal antibody treatment in Clatsop County to stave off the worst symptoms of the virus.

The treatment has been found not to be effective against the omicron variant, which may soon replace delta as the county's dominant variant.

"We don't have tests that can tell us within a day or two, like, 'OK, you have omicron,' and, 'You have delta,'" Chris Laman, the director of pharmacy and cancer center services at Columbia Memorial Hospital in Astoria, said in an interview.

"Once you get to a point where it's the dominant variant, you just assume that everyone has omicron, and then you only allow treatments that basically work for both of them, not that work for some but not all."

Since mid-fall, patients — roughly four to seven at a time — have been given the treatment at clinics on Tuesdays and Fridays at Camp Rilea Armed Forces Training Center, the site of the county's virus operations hub. The clinics were a joint operation of Columbia Memorial, Providence Seaside Hospital and the Clatsop County Public Health Department. The

last clinic was set for Friday.

Monoclonal antibody treatment, which involves four subcutaneous injections in the patient's abdomen, uses lab-generated proteins that slow the virus' replication and prevent cases from turning severe.

A different monoclonal antibody treatment could be effective against omicron, but the setup is more complex, involving an IV infusion that must be administered by a nurse with advanced certification. The injection-based treatment could be given by a pharmacist.

The intravenous iteration of monoclonals may be administered in Tillamook, and Columbia Memorial Hospital anticipates sending some patients there, Laman said.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration has approved two oral antiviral medications, developed by Pfizer and Merck, that patients can take at home. The drugs are not yet widely available — Oregon has received less than 700 courses of Pfizer's, Laman said — but more are expected to arrive.

"If we have access to those medications, that should replace the need for the monoclonal treatments," Chris Strear, the chief medical officer at Columbia Memorial, said in a news conference on Wednesday.

## Popeyes receives conditional approval for Warrenton restaurant

By ETHAN MYERS  
*The Astorian*

WARRENTON — Conditional approval from the Planning Commission will allow a new Popeyes Louisiana Kitchen to open in the coming year.

The fast-food restaurant will be located along Ensign Lane, adjacent to Walmart and Fibre Federal Credit Union. The 2,100-square-foot building will contain dine-in seating, along with a drive-thru window.

Because the plan proposed a drive-thru, a public hearing was held at a Planning Commission meeting in December.

Police and public works expressed worries about the potential for increased traffic in an already-busy area, Scott Hazelton, the city's planning director, said at the meeting.

Several planning commissioners echoed similar concerns.

"The traffic seems to me to be a pretty important issue with this — with all the roads and this being a pretty popular restaurant," Planning Commissioner Christine Bridgens said. "(It) will create a lot of traffic."

Popeyes plans to have 17 parking spots and the

ability to stack 13 vehicles in the drive-thru.

PM Design, representing the restaurant, answered questions during the meeting to alleviate concerns about traffic.

Charlie Patton, the director of construction for Ambrosia QSR, which is a franchisee for Popeyes, said they considered previous issues regarding traffic in the area.

"We spent quite a bit of time designing this space ... We were very aware of the issues that occurred with Wendy's when it opened up and why the city is concerned likewise," Patton said. "We went through probably eight different iterations of site plans to get to the point where we would least impact the backup on Ensign."

Patton agreed with the idea that traffic mitigation would be needed during the first few weeks of opening, but added that more than 20 cars can be stacked in the drive-thru before reaching Ensign Lane.

The concerns brought up by police and public works will need to be addressed prior to plans being submitted to the building department, Hazelton said.

## Boating deaths across the state drop in 2021

By SAVANNAH EADENS  
*The Oregonian*

The year 2021 was a safer year for recreational boating than 2020, according to the Oregon State Marine Board, but the number of deaths remained above historic levels.

The board's annual review of the boating season found that 19 people died in 2021 compared with 26 in 2020.

2020 was an outlier with the most deaths in boating accidents since 1985. Nationally, more people flocked outdoors as they practiced social distancing during the pandemic, and with that came risks for those who weren't skilled boaters or didn't follow basic boating safety, said Randy Henry, an Oregon State Marine Board boating safety program manager.

In 2021, the deaths remain high but are more in line with the past decade, which averaged 16.7 per year. The lowest number was seven in 2014, but most years range in the teens.

The deaths are calculated according to a U.S. Coast

Guard definition of boats and does not include people who drown while swimming or on inner tubes or pool toys, for example.

As more people are boating, deaths increase, Henry said. But much of the increase involves casual recreational boating, like in canoes, paddle boards and kayaks, because they are cheap to buy and easier to use — but don't require safety courses or licenses.

Victims ranged in age from 5 to 79 years old, and deaths occurred in the ocean, inland rivers, large and small lakes and reservoirs. Half the fatalities were in non-motorized or small electric-powered boats, but others were in larger boats designed for open water, according to the state agency.

"We're headed back in the right direction," Henry said. "But it would be a great resolution for more boaters to simply wear their life jackets in 2022."

Five of the boating victims were wearing life jackets, four of whom were caught in surf. Two of those suffered serious injuries in the surf, and two others, including a child,

were trapped in the cabin of a capsized boat. The fifth person had a medical event that contributed to their death, the agency said in a news release.

Three double-fatality incidents happened in the Oregon surf zone or at coastal bar crossings in 2021. In some cases, people died in swift outgoing tides, others after falling overboard. A few boats capsized after mechanical equipment problems.

Two young children died in boating incidents in 2021, including one who was in a small inflatable raft on the edge of a river who was not wearing a life jacket.

"It breaks your heart to see these incidents," Henry said. "Occasionally there is an inci-

dent where the life jacket isn't enough, but most of the time, it is. Parents should always put their child in a life jacket, even if just playing on a tube or small inflatable boat at the edge of a pond or other waterway. Things happen so fast."

When using an inflatable life jacket, be sure to test it before boating, Henry said.

"When you look at the individual incidents, you see so many that could easily have been prevented if the operator had taken a very simple, basic safety precaution, such as waiting until the outgoing tide cycle finished, wearing a life jacket, or checking the weather," Henry said. "Safe boating is easy if you take the time."

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