

# Musicians: 'It's been a long time since we relied on a regular paycheck'

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I just have felt pretty overwhelmed with the world and I didn't feel like dwelling on it through writing."

"It would have been a pretty despondent set of songs if lyrics were in there," Ydstie added.

In the past year, the couple beefed up their home recording system. They played a few livestream shows in 2020, plus a couple of in-person outdoor shows during the summer. They're in the process of creating demos for their next album.

"We thought we might be able to just make something completely from doing home recordings that we would be happy with and we pretty quickly realized that a lot of what's great about the process and the magic for us, is being together with other folks in the studio," Ydstie said. "It's been a long period of kind of sitting on the songs and waiting to see when it feels safe enough to do that."

Before the pandemic, the couple typically played one or two shows a week. They have a couple of outdoor shows scheduled for this summer. The duo has avoided performing indoor shows because they're not comfortable with large indoor gatherings yet.

"It'll be nice to get to a place where the idea of promoting a show doesn't feel socially irresponsible because ..." Ydstie said. "There's so much uncertainty about what is really safe and you certainly don't want to put people in unsafe situations," Claborn added.

The cancellation of the tour and other planned shows has had a big impact.

"(Playing music) is very important for my mental health. I realized, it was also how I saw people, all this stuff. I had all these boxes that were ticked from playing music, then to have that pulled away is really hard. Not to mention, that's our job and how we make money," Ydstie said. "I really put all my eggs in one basket."

## Performing and parenting

Much of the past year, Claborn and Ydstie have been focused on caring for their 6-year-old daughter, Hazel.

"I've definitely talked to people like, 'Oh man, this must have been a really good songwriting time for you, just being home.' And I'm like, 'No, quite the opposite. It's been a good Lego building time,'" Ydstie said.

"Right? My brain is filled with Pokémon," Claborn added.

The couple has collaborated with a few of their neighbors to provide a child-care pod, where a group of four kids stays at one household per day. The pod allows the parents to take a break from providing constant child care, while the kids can connect with friends.

"It can be hard to practice and just be doing music at home all the time. I didn't realize before this how much of our practice time was also playing shows," Ydstie said. "And also, she was in school. So the fact that there's no school made it really challenging to put that time into music."

The experience of trying to fill in for teachers while schools weren't open increased Ydstie and Claborn's respect for teachers.

"In the beginning, I was like, 'OK, I'm going to inspire them and we're going to learn about cool stuff.' Really quickly, reality came crashing down hard: I'm not a good teacher. Maybe they don't really care about the stuff I'm excited about right now," Ydstie said. "But it was really fun and enlightening."

The couple received some financial relief through unemployment. The payments "made it so we could focus on other things,"

Claborn said.

"Part of this profession, being a touring musician, is you get used to the lean times," Ydstie said. "We've built our life around financial instability."

"It's been a long time since we relied on a regular paycheck," Claborn added.

## Moving forward

Claborn and Ydstie are excited to interact with live audiences and collaborate with other musicians in person.

"It's so easy to think of a performance as just the sort of one-sided thing where you're playing songs for people that are sort of passively enjoying them," Ydstie said. "But it's not like that. Really, the amazing part of it and all the shows that are the best are situations where there's a give and take between the performer and the audience and energy turns into ..."

"Something bigger than what originated," Claborn said.

Local coronavirus case numbers and restrictions will influence when Claborn and Ydstie return to performing indoors. They look forward to returning to venues like Fort George Brewery and the Voodoo Room.

"It depends on the state of the world," Claborn said.

# County reports 21 new virus cases

*The Astorian*

Clatsop County has reported 21 new coronavirus cases over the past few days.

On Wednesday, the county reported 14 cases.

The cases include a female between 10 and 19, a man in his 20s and a man in his 50s living in the southern part of the county. The others live in the northern part of the county and involve a male under 9, a male between 10 and 19, three men and three women in their 20s, a man and a woman in their 50s and a woman in her 60s.

All 14 were recovering at home.

On Tuesday, the county reported seven cases.

The cases include a woman in her 30s and a man in his 60s living in the southern part of the county. The others live in the northern part of the county and involve two men and a woman in their 20s, a woman in her 30s and a woman in her 50s.

All seven were recovering at home.

A woman in her 40s from the southern part of the county whose case was reported on Tuesday was determined not to be a county case.

The county has recorded 939 cases since the start of the pandemic. According to the county, 22 were hospitalized and eight have died.

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# Restrictions: 'Let us do our own thing now'

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shutdowns across the state are imminent, and, at this point in the pandemic, are even more economically detrimental.

The board's letter to the governor on Tuesday is part of an organized effort with the Association of Oregon Counties to show solidarity with the Oregon Restaurant and Lodging Association, which called Brown's new restrictions arbitrary and discriminatory.

"The time has come to allow our communities to move forward while embracing continued health and safety precautions," the board's letter said. "Our people understand the risks associated with COVID and our businesses have proven their ability to adhere to the highest expectations in safety, sanitation and air quality. It is no coincidence Oregon has not seen one instance of a superspreader event tied to our hospitality industry."

"You must know restrictions on specific types of businesses compared to others within our local communities is creating rifts and dividing people rather than bringing Oregonians together. We can flip the script by removing state mandated business restrictions on our communities while empowering our county health departments to uphold high expectations for ongoing health and safety



Hailey Hoffman/The Astorian  
**COVID-19 vaccines sit ready to be administered at the Clatsop County Fairgrounds.**

measures as recommended by the CDC (federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)."

## 'Today's announcement will save lives'

Brown has said she expects this will be the last time prohibitions will have to be put in place.

Counties will move into or remain in extreme risk when they reach the virus case rate threshold and percent positivity. In addition, Oregon would have to have patients with the virus occupying 300 hospital beds or more and a 15% increase in the seven-day hospitalization average over the past week.

Counties will stay in extreme risk for a maximum of three weeks.

In an effort to speed up the return to normal business operations, Brown said counties will be evaluated weekly for at least the next three weeks. Updates to county

risk levels will be announced on Tuesdays. The governor is also working with state lawmakers to approve a \$20 million small business emergency relief package to support impacted businesses in counties at extreme risk through the commercial rent relief program.

"If we don't act now, doctors, nurses, hospitals and other health care providers in Oregon will be stretched to their limits treating severe cases of COVID-19," the governor said in a statement on Tuesday. "Today's announcement will save lives and help stop COVID-19 hospitalizations from spiking even higher. With new COVID-19 variants widespread in so many of our communities, it will take all of us working together to bring this back under control."

"The fastest way to lift health and safety restrictions is for Oregonians to get vaccinated as quickly as possible and follow the safety measures we know stop this virus from spreading. I recognize the burden these restrictions place on Oregon businesses and working families. My goal is to lift these restrictions as soon as it is safely possible, and keep Oregon on the path for lifting most health and safety requirements by the end of June so we can fully reopen our economy."

"But we will only get there if enough Oregonians get vaccinated. There are

appointments available right now all across the state."

## 'Let us do our own thing now'

In a Facebook post, Commissioner Courtney Bangs said that although she wishes the county's letter was more direct, she said the county is asking the governor "to let us do our own thing now."

Warrenton Mayor Henry Balensifer supported the board's letter. "I agree with Chair Kujala that it's time to hand the reins to the local health department where local issues can be best managed," the mayor said in a Facebook post. "We've already seen how pitifully aloof (Oregon Health Authority) can be in investigating our region's largest outbreaks, and I would have greater confidence in professionals better in tune with the situation on the ground. It was Clatsop County who was poised to take action when the state told them to step aside during our biggest outbreaks."

"Furthermore, the OSHA (Oregon Occupational Safety and Health Administration) and OHA guidelines are now out of step with CDC best practices on sanitization, and masks. It's time to do what other states are doing — give the authority back to the counties. Local authorities have shown they are willing to take drastic measures the state wouldn't dream of to meet emergencies."

# Rentals: Housing prices have continued to climb

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The city said homestay lodging will provide a small increase in lodging tax for the city, as well as provide homeowners the ability to generate revenue and offset housing costs.

The goal is to prevent vacation rentals from eating up limited housing stock.

A Clatsop County hous-

ing study in 2019 found that vacation rentals and second homes are taking up a substantial share of the housing stock and driving up rental and home prices. Nearly a third of homes in the county were vacant, according to the study, and construction of second homes is outpacing those for long-term residents.

Housing prices have continued to climb, especially

during the coronavirus pandemic, with many people living in metro areas and out of state looking to move to the North Coast.

"Having been on the county housing task force, there's a ton of housing that has been gobbled up by people getting second homes and renting them out that don't live here," Mayor Henry Balensifer said during a City Commission meeting

in January. "And they rent it out to pay the mortgage on it. Unfortunately, that's driving up housing costs for everybody — and substantially — especially this last year."

The mayor said vacation rentals have not been as big of a problem for Warrenton as surrounding cities, but it is important for the city to think ahead before it becomes a concern.

# Column: People encouraged to come and enjoy the view

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indoor entertainment, with 25% capacity at the county's high risk level. Pynes guessed that the Column is crowded with 20 people at a time when open.

"We don't know what the occupancy is, and we'd have to have somebody man the door to count four people in and four people out," Pynes said.

The Column likely won't reopen until the county

reaches the lowest level of risk from the coronavirus, Pynes said. In the meantime, Van Dusen encouraged people to come enjoy the view.

"A lot of my friends just drive up to the Column and

buy their annual ... pass for \$5, and they'll sit up there in their car and eat lunch," he said. "It's a beautiful view, and I'm hoping that this slight controversy will get more people to go up there and take a look at the park."