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Photos by Hailey Hoffman/The Astorian

Ben Christensen scoops fresh tater tots at the On Tots food truck. The popular food cart is struggling to acquire enough tater tots and other supplies.

Supply issues disrupt food carts

A lack of ingredients causes headaches

By **ETHAN MYERS**
The Astorian

Restrictions on capacity. Labor shortages. Overwhelming demand.

As if problems from the coronavirus pandemic were not big enough headaches for food carts across Astoria, supply chain disruptions have made it difficult to get ingredients.

On Tots, a food cart outside of Reach Break Brewing, has struggled to acquire their most essential item: tater tots.

“It gives you anxiety at the end of the day when you look in the freezer and you are like, ‘I do not have tots for tomorrow,’” said Jordan Gagnon, the co-owner of On Tots.

Like many places, On Tots gets food and supplies, including tater tots, from the U.S. Foods Chef store in Warrenton. United Natural Foods Inc., the store’s supplier and one of the largest wholesale food distributors in the country, had a coronavirus outbreak at a facility in Centralia, Washington, at the end of July. It shut down for a week, which substantially interrupted supply and distribution.

‘Snowballed’

Olaf Ydstie, the owner of Good Bowl food truck, also shops at U.S. Foods Chef store and said supply issues have “snowballed” since the outbreak. He has struggled to get several important items, including rice, beans and various sauces.

“A normal shopping trip is not going to be for a while because you walk into our Chef store and it’s scary, to be honest with you,” Gagnon said.

But it soon became clear to Gagnon that supply issues stretched beyond Chef store.

“It is above anything local,” he said. “This is a regional issue. This is a huge distribution issue.”

As the effects trickled down, On Tots stopped seeing the Ore-Ida tater tots



Jordan and Emily Gagnon run the On Tots food cart.

they use altogether. But out of familiarity and loyalty to Ore-Ida’s product, Gagnon and his wife and co-owner, Emily, did what they could to work around the issues.

They have worked directly with Ore-Ida, teamed up with other suppliers and driven to Portland numerous times to get their desired product.

Several times, Gagnon said, they were told tater tots were supposed to arrive and did not. There were also days when tater tots were acquired by suppliers, but the delivery could not be made due to a shortage of drivers.

While frustrating, Gagnon is empathetic to the troubles of suppliers and distributors.

“They are doing everything they can,” he said. “I have a lot of respect for anybody and everybody right now because everyone is struggling one way or another.”

At On Tots, chicken has been a problem as well. Since their most popular dish without tater tots is chicken strips, it could force the them to make adjustments to their menu.

“Here we are, looking like we are getting a light at the end of the tunnel, and then we are getting hit with this,” Gagnon said. “We are going to get

creative.”

The scarcity of chicken has also impacted Mai Tong Thai Food, another food cart near Reach Break.

Owner Robert Burns said they have also had trouble getting seafood, fresh vegetables and items such as to-go boxes for several months.

While Burns and his wife and co-owner, Sopha, have been able to stay afloat, they may soon have to make a tough decision.

“For us, it is a serious issue,” Burns said. “We have not yet, but there may come a time when we literally have to shut down because we can’t get certain ingredients.”

“We have a fairly large menu so for one item, we can do some things, but there are some things, when we run out — like when we run out of rice and some noodle products — we will just have to shut down.”

In addition to the supply issues, costs for many essential items have skyrocketed.

Burns said the cost of chicken has doubled. Both Gagnon and Burns said the cost of cooking oil has risen significantly.

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Masks required outdoors

Mandate takes effect on Friday as delta variant swamps state

By **GARY WARNER**
and **GRIFFIN REILLY**
Oregon Capital Bureau and The Astorian

Gov. Kate Brown has expanded a mandatory mask order to cover most outdoor public settings as the coronavirus spreads across Oregon and hospitals see record numbers of virus patients.

The new rule will go into effect Friday and includes everyone aged 5 and over regardless of whether or not they are vaccinated. Masks will be required in outdoor public situations, including large gatherings. Brown also is recommending masks for private gatherings outdoors, though they are not mandatory.

“The delta variant is spreading fast and wide, throwing our state into a level of crisis we have not yet seen in the pandemic,” Brown said in a Tuesday afternoon announcement. “Cases and hospitalizations are at a record high.”

The immediate impact will be on those going to outdoor sports events, fairs and large gatherings. The new rule will be in effect for the Oregon State Fair in Salem that begins Friday and for the Pendleton Round-Up on Sept. 11. Masks will be required for college football games, as well.

Organizers of the Hood to Coast Relay, which takes place this weekend from Mount Hood to Seaside, are also asking

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City requires vaccination for employees

Most workers will have until mid-October

By **KATIE FRANKOWICZ**
The Astorian

City employees in Astoria, except for police officers, will be required to get vaccinated against the coronavirus under a new rule passed by the City Council on Tuesday.

The decision comes a day after the U.S. Food and Drug Administration’s full approval of the Pfizer vaccine for people 16 and older, the first for a COVID-19 vaccine. The federal government had previously authorized Pfizer and two other vaccines for emergency use against the virus.

Last week, Gov. Kate Brown announced a vaccine mandate for teachers and staff in K-12 schools and all health care workers, including firefighters.

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Park district requires employees to get vaccinated • A3

Church annex proposal moves forward

A neighborhood dispute in Uppertown

By **KATIE FRANKOWICZ**
The Astorian

A controversial church annex project that has highlighted the uneasy balance between quality of life and property rights in an Uppertown neighborhood is moving forward for now.

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Warrenton hires new planning director • A3

The Astoria Planning Commission voted 3-2 on Tuesday night to approve Bethany Free Lutheran Church’s proposal to build a 5,000-square-foot annex to use for indoor sports and church and community gatherings on vacant land above Lief Erikson Drive off 34th Street.

The Planning Commission had voted to tentatively deny the project

at a meeting in June, but reopened the hearing in July to allow new testimony from people on both sides of the issue.

On Tuesday, one commissioner who had voted against the project was absent and Planning Commissioner David Kroening, who had originally voted to deny the project, changed his mind. He felt he didn’t have concrete reasons to say “no” to the project, he said.

Members of the Tadei family — vocal opponents of the project — are considering an appeal of the Planning Commission’s decision,

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Edward Stratton/The Astorian

Some neighbors oppose a new annex near Bethany Free Lutheran Church in Uppertown.



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