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Dean Guernsey/The Bulletin

**Mackenzie Scott, manager of Tuesday Morning in Bend, stands with a sign stating reduced hours of operation due to a lack of workers. Scott can't keep the store open for the chain's dedicated hours. The Bend store closes each night at 6 p.m. instead of 8 p.m. because there's not enough managers to staff the shifts, Scott said.**

## Getting creative to lure back workers

Companies look to incentives and training

By SUZANNE ROIG  
The Bulletin

**B**END — Filling vacant positions and figuring out future growth will take creative thinking at St. Charles Health System.

Hiring managers at central Oregon's four-hospital system are reaching out to schools, colleges and medical associations looking for workers to fill the 691 vacant positions. The hospital system is offering signing bonuses, free education for those already working but who want to become a front-line caregiver and referral bonuses, said Rebecca Berry, St. Charles Health System's vice president of human resources.

The fallout of the hiring crisis in Oregon is that employers have dramatically changed how they do business: Doctors have delayed elective surgeries, retailers have reduced business hours and companies have increased

wages and embraced aggressive hiring practices.

And companies have been forced to think about growth at a time when it's difficult to maintain the status quo.

Not only is St. Charles trying to fill vacant positions created by workers leaving or retiring, but it's trying to anticipate future growth and hire to accommodate that, Berry said. With more than 2,000 elective surgeries postponed because they may require an overnight stay at the regional hospital,

and a patient load running at 85% on average, the hospital system has to anticipate where the growth might be.

"Now we run new employee orientations twice a month," Berry said. "Some of our hiring needs are because of anticipated growth and the high level of patient census. So we need more workers. We're trying to grow with a plan in place."

St. Charles is just one example of how the worker shortage has changed workplace culture.

The staffing situation has gotten so dire at Tuesday Morning, a houseware retailer at the Bend Factory Stores, that Mackenzie Scott can't keep the store open for the chain's dedicated hours. The Bend store closes each night at 6 p.m. instead of 8 p.m. because there's not enough managers to staff the shifts, Scott said.

"We don't have enough managers to cover all the days," Scott said. "No one is applying. I've had multiple ads up. Before this COVID-19 stuff I'd have no problem finding help."

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### Worker Shortage



SECOND IN A 5-PART SERIES

## Port feels the strain of labor shortage

Agency has struggled to find workers

By ETHAN MYERS  
The Astorian

The labor shortage crushing the hospitality, service and transportation industries has worked its way to the Port of Astoria.

"We're still operating with a shorter maintenance staff than we have had in years past, and, additionally, we found it difficult to fill part-time and on-call positions, whether that be airport fueling or Port security," Will Isom, the Port's executive director, said. "So we have had folks who had to put in extra time."

The financial blow of the coronavirus pandemic, mainly from the absence of cruise ships, has left the Port's budget for temporary employees much



Hailey Hoffman/The Astorian

The Seven Seas Mariner docked at the Port of Astoria in 2019.

lower, Isom said.

Since much of the Port's business comes during the tourism season, the agency relies on those workers to get by.

"What becomes a challenge is

when we have these short stints where we get really busy, like when the Buoy 10 fishery opens, and you need added staff on a

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## Hospitals see decline in virus patients

Health care providers hopeful after summer peak

By ERICK BENGEL  
The Astorian

Hospitals in Clatsop County have experienced an ebb in the number of patients admitted for the coronavirus.

After about the first week of August, Columbia Memorial Hospital began to see a rise in COVID-related hospitalizations, reaching a peak of 11 virus patients, Judy Geiger, the hospital's vice president of patient care services, said at a news conference Wednesday.

For a few weeks, the 25-bed Astoria hospital averaged between six and seven virus patients a day. Within the past few days, however, the number fell to three or four virus patients a day.

Providence Seaside Hospital saw a peak of about six virus patients, "which is a lot when you've got just 25 beds," Jason Plamondon, the hospital's chief nursing officer, said.

Providence Seaside has since been averaging three to four virus patients a day, he said, but over the past several days that number has dropped to between zero and two. "I don't want to jinx anything. Right now things are looking good," he said.

Geiger and Plamondon said the recent COVID patients are, on average, getting sicker than patients in the past and are requiring more specialized care.

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## Low-oxygen levels off West Coast a concern

Climate change a factor

By KATIE FRANKOWICZ  
The Astorian

Low-oxygen levels off the coast of Oregon and Washington state hit earlier than usual this spring and have lasted longer than any other hypoxic event recorded on the West Coast in the past 35 years.

Exacerbated by human-caused climate change, it has led scientists and fishermen to worry about the formation of a massive "dead zone" and fed concerns about the unknown long-term impacts on ocean ecosystems and valuable fisheries like Dungeness crab.

The Pacific Northwest has experienced hypoxia seasons regularly for two decades. Winds initiate seasonal upwelling, pushing warmer surface water off from shore and drawing up colder, nutrient-rich but low-oxygen water from below. Hypoxia events occur as organisms in the water die and sink, removing even more oxygen.

While fish and crab often flee hypoxic zones, some organisms and animals can become trapped in the middle of these low-oxygen areas and die.

Francis Chan, a marine ecologist with Oregon State University, said scientists expected a bad hypoxia season this year based on weather conditions in April, but they had not expected the low-oxygen levels to persist for so long.

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