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Photos by Lydia Ely/The Astorian

Kayla Slovak Perez, center, and Diana M. Niño, right, sit at a table with bags, masks, thermometers and other personal protective equipment laid out for people to take at a COVID-19 and flu vaccination clinic hosted by Consejo Hispano and the Oregon Health Authority on Wednesday at Haystack Gardens in Cannon Beach.

Schools struggle with lack of bus drivers

Local districts request help from the state

By ETHAN MYERS
The Astorian

School superintendents in Clatsop County are sounding the alarm about a lack of school bus drivers.

The labor shortage comes as coronavirus protocols limit the number of students that can be on a bus at once, increasing the pressure to find more drivers. Between the five school districts, they need nine bus drivers, Knappa Superintendent Bill Fritz said.

Fritz and Astoria Superintendent Craig Hoppes said they have been able to make ends meet to start the school year, but the lack of backup drivers is concerning.

Although Knappa has yet to make cuts to routes or see long delays, Fritz said, "it's only a matter of time unless we can get some drivers."

In September, a joint request was made on behalf of superintendents in Astoria, Knappa, Warrenton and Seaside to the Oregon Office of Emergency Management asking for school bus drivers, which could result in the Oregon National Guard stepping in to help.

"Unless they are able to get permanent-type drivers ... it's just going to be a Band-Aid until we can get more drivers," Hoppes said.

The Warrenton-Hammond School District does not have a major shortage, Superintendent Tom Rogozinski said, but is running a little thin due to increased routes from the addition of Warrenton Middle School.

Jewell Superintendent Steve Phillips said that as a rural school district, it is always tough to find school bus drivers, but the district does not have an immediate need and did not join the countywide request.

School districts expect to lose some workers because of Gov. Kate Brown's vaccine mandate on teachers and other

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Hispanic population grows on North Coast

Census shows a 35.6% increase in the past decade

By ERICK BENGEL
The Astorian

The Hispanic population in Clatsop County grew by 35.6% over the past decade, according to the 2020 census, but community leaders believe the figure is likely an undercount.

Between 2010 and 2020, the number of Hispanics rose from 2,838 to 3,848. Hispanics now make up 9.4% of the county's population.

The largest increase was in Warrenton, the county's fastest-growing city, where Hispanics roughly doubled, from 286 to 571.

Despite the growth, Jenny Pool Radway, the executive director of Consejo

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Prayer candles sit on the shelves of Kiosco Mexicano in Warrenton.

State lifts health advisory in Cannon Beach

Fecal bacteria levels have declined

By KATIE FRANKOWICZ
The Astorian

CANNON BEACH — The state has lifted a health advisory for Cannon Beach and Tolovana Beach State Recreation Site.

The Oregon Health Authority issued the advisory on Tuesday after water samples off the Gower Street storm outflow and in the ocean water off Tolovana showed high levels of fecal bacteria.

On Thursday, further testing revealed those levels had dropped back down.

"Contact with the ocean water no longer poses a higher-than-normal risk," according to the Oregon Health Authority.

Cannon Beach officials say a spike in fecal bacteria is expected when heavy rains follow a long stretch of dry weather. In these cases, the higher-than-usual amount of fecal bacteria in the water is often tied to wildlife.

The advisory came after a rainy weekend on the North Coast.

Hailey Hoffman/The Astorian



State discloses virus cases at care facilities

New cases at Astor Place, Providence ElderPlace

By ERICK BENGEL
The Astorian

The Oregon Health Authority has disclosed coronavirus cases at two care facilities in Clatsop County.

Five virus cases were reported at Astor Place Assisted Living Community in Astoria in late September. Three virus cases were reported at Providence ElderPlace in North Coast, a Seaside outpatient center, according to the health authority's weekly outbreak report.

"The safety and health of our residents and employees is our top priority," Jeremy Ross, the director of communications at Enlivant, a company that oversees Astor Place and senior living homes nationwide, said in an email.

"Astor Place experienced about one year and eight months without a single positive COVID-19 case, but when that changed we followed all state and local guidelines," Ross said. "Since the health department information came out, we can report all COVID cases have finished precautionary isolation and have recovered."

"While we can't get into specific health cases, we have no doubt our industry-leading vaccine policy played a role in preventing more serious results and we are grateful for these outcomes."



Hailey Hoffman/The Astorian

Coronavirus cases have been reported at Astor Place.

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Astor Place did not answer questions about the circumstances of the outbreak, whether staff or residents caught the virus, or the vaccination status of the infected individuals.

Mike Antrim, a Providence spokesman, said the virus cases at ElderPlace did not involve patients. The facility, which is not a residen-

tial center, closed for 10 days as a result of the outbreak and reopened Friday. For privacy reasons, Providence declined to share more details, he said.

The health authority, meanwhile, listed a virus outbreak at Clatsop Care Health & Rehabilitation at 11 virus cases.

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