

The INSIDE

The Week in Review page 2



METRO page 6



Arts & ENTERTAINMENT

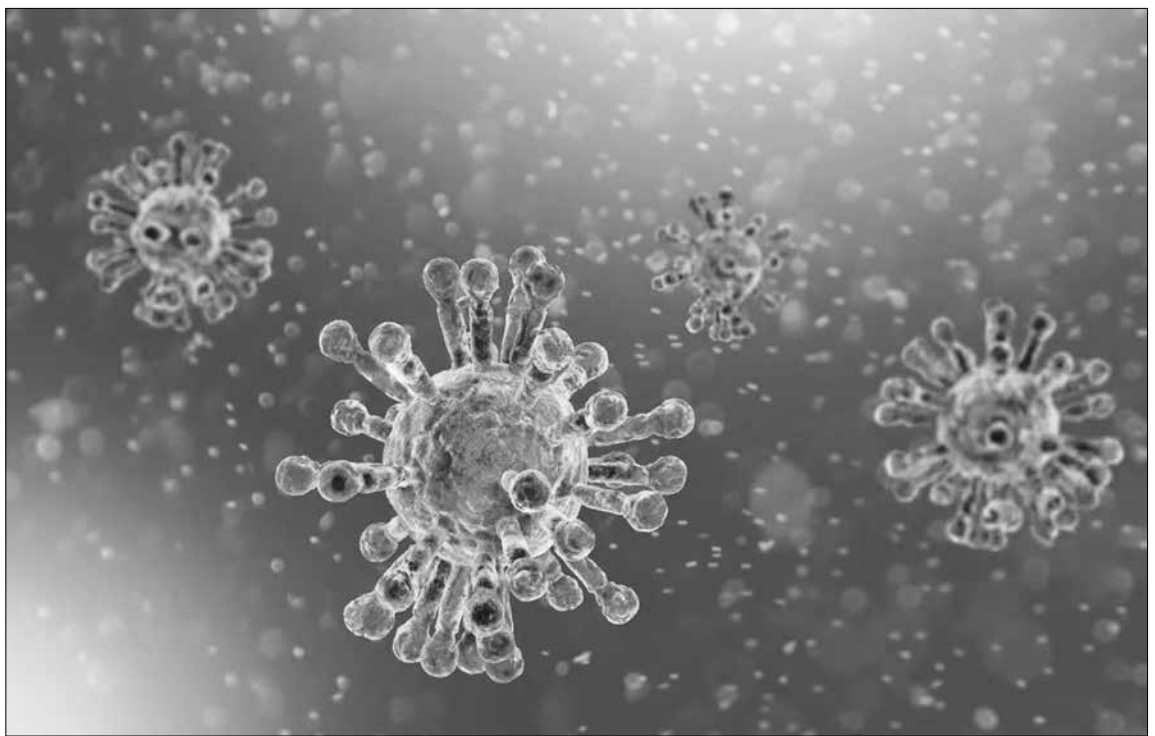
page 9

OPINION



CLASSIFIED/BIDS pages 10

LOCAL NEWS



With the new delta variant causing a spike in COVID-19 hospitalizations and cases, Gov. Kate Brown has announced a new statewide indoor mask requirement, warning that the state's health care system could be overwhelmed.

Cash Incentives for Vaccines Outreach targets Black community hesitancy

BY BEVERLY CORBELL
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

As the Covid-19 Delta variant rages in the Portland area as across the nation, the impacts show that Black people, African immigrants and other minority populations are much less likely to get a vaccine that can save their lives, and at the same time, people of color are also being hospitalized at a higher rate.

Dr. Bukhosi Dube, public health physician with the Oregon Health Authority, reported that Black people are being hospitalized at 5.5 times the rate of whites. The vaccination rates for whites in Oregon is about 73 percent, while it is still in the mid-40 percent for African Americans and other people of color.

In a recent interview on KPTV, Dube described a general mistrust in Black and Brown communities rooted in systemic racism and other historic systems that continue to oppress communities of color within the state, and within the country.

To combat that scenario, Multnomah County is offering gift cards ranging from \$50 to \$150 for people to get vaccinated at any county vaccination site. Everyone 12 and over can get a Visa gift card as

long as they are available.

Ebony Clarke, interim director of the Multnomah County Health Department, said the gift card program has already seen an increase in vaccination rates among African Americans and other communities of color, but more is needed.

"Vaccine uptake seems to be a lot lower in African-American communities and we know the best protection against Covid-19 is being immunized," she said. "But as we continue to see a high number of vaccine hesitancy, we started the gift card program with the hope it would prevent barriers and challenges to get vaccinated."

Clarke said she hears stories about how people can't afford to take time off from work to get the shot, or they don't have childcare or don't have a way to get to a vaccination clinic. She hopes the gift cards will remove some of those barriers.

Details on the free county vaccination clinics, including times and locations, and vaccine gift cards are available at multco.us/novel-coronavirus-covid-19/upcoming-covid-19-vaccination-clin

CONTINUED ON PAGE 10

Soul 2 Soul on Black Resilience

Event offers resources, vaccinations

A grass roots event to repair the bridges of the Black Community with a focus on free vaccinations for COVID-19 and resources to help with rent, food, college scholarships and more, will be held Saturday, Aug. 28 from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the Lloyd Center Regal Cinemas parking lot.

The community-led event, with walk-ins welcome, will celebrate the resilience and the health of people of color with a focus on improving adverse impacts like COVID-19, racial injustice, the rise of gun violence and the effects of gentrification in the city of Portland.

According to participating Black leaders, this is a clarion call to reach those in the Black and African American communities who are unvaccinated.

A drive thru experience will offer participants free COVID-19 shots.

Incentives such as cash gift cards, rental assistance, food boxes, college scholarships, raffles, health resource booths, and swag bags will also be distributed. Live entertainment will also be part of the festivities.

Sponsors include the Coalition of African & African American Pastors and the Office of the Governor. Other sponsors and partners include the Multnomah County Health Department, Legacy Health Systems, Washington County Department of Health and Human Services, Project Access Now, REACH (Multnomah County), Children's Community Clinic, Bridge-Pamoja, REAP, and Self Enhancement, Inc.

For more information, visit soul2soulpdx.com or email soul2soul@gmail.com.

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