

La Grande photographer captures the quarantined

By PHIL WRIGHT
EO Media Group

LA GRANDE — Melissa Gomes set herself a challenge Monday — capture images of local families staying home to curb the spread of the coronavirus outbreak.

She owns and operates a photography business in La Grande and works in and out of the studio. But she and her family have been isolating themselves to their home in the Grande Ronde Valley as much as possible, she said, to do their part in the COVID-19 crisis.

Gomes said a friend sent her a link to a story about a photographer in another state taking portraits of families as they sheltered at home. Then Oregon Gov. Kate Brown on Monday issued the stay home order that went into effect statewide Tuesday at 12:01 a.m.

As much as the notion intrigued her to snap locals following social distancing practices, she needed to give it some thought.

“I was quarantining my family,” Gomes said. “I had to figure out a safe way to do it.”

Gomes said she realized she could do something akin to what that other photographer did and maybe help the Kai family of Elgin. Cody



Local photographer Melissa Gomes shot this and other images on Monday of La Grande families, who were sheltering in place to help stop the spread of the coronavirus. Gomes said she and the families all followed social distancing protocols.



Photo contributed by Melissa Gomes

Local photographer Melissa Gomes shot this and other images on Monday of La Grande families who were sheltering in place to help stop the spread of the coronavirus. Gomes said she took the images from sidewalks and families stayed

and April Kai and their young daughters lost their home early Monday in a fire.

Monday, at 12:45 p.m., Gomes posted a message to her business Facebook page letting folks know that, if they like, she would take photos for free, in sessions lasting no more than five minutes, but would ask

for donations to help the Kai family. She said she arrived in La Grande at 1:15 p.m. and the project was on.

“They just messaged me their address and they stayed on their porch, and I shot on the sidewalk,” she said.

She and the families, she said, kept at least 6 feet apart. In the span of four hours

or so, she photographed 11 families.

“I bounced around all over La Grande,” she said.

She dubbed the project, “Porch Sessions: Stronger Together.” On Tuesday, she posted another message to her business Facebook page, thanking those who participated and who donated

to the Kai family. The post included this:

“In this time of uncertainty, let us bind ourselves together. Let us lift each other up. Let us meet the needs of those around us. Let us show the spirit and heart of Eastern Oregon. We are a small community that loves BIG! So let’s seek out ways

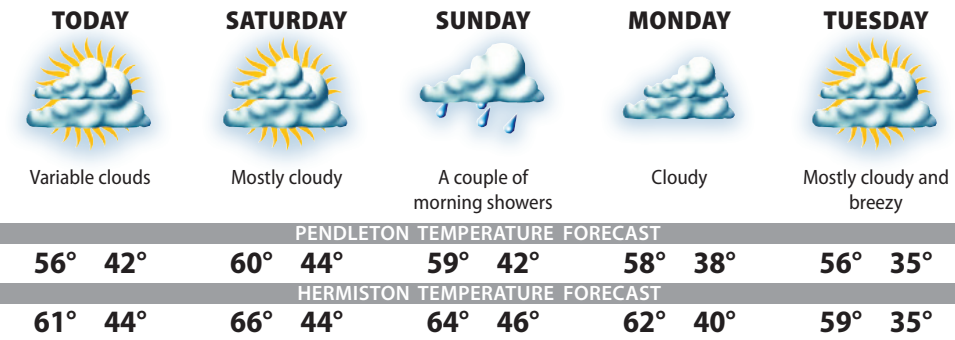
to love big.”

She also said she shut down her photography business in La Grande.

“I’m done until the governor says it’s OK to proceed,” she said.

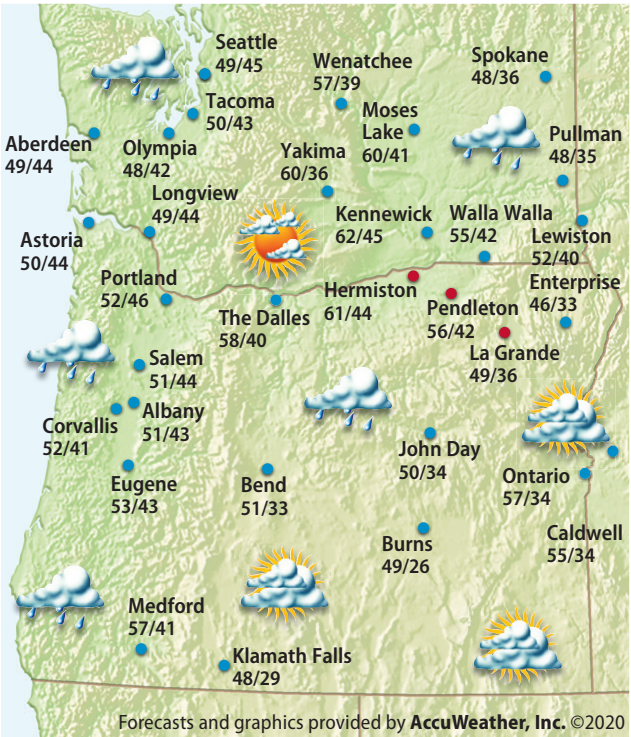
You can find more of the photos from the “Porch Sessions” on the Melissa Gomes Photography Facebook page.

Forecast for Pendleton Area



OREGON FORECAST

Shown is today's weather. Temperatures are today's highs and tonight's lows.



ALMANAC

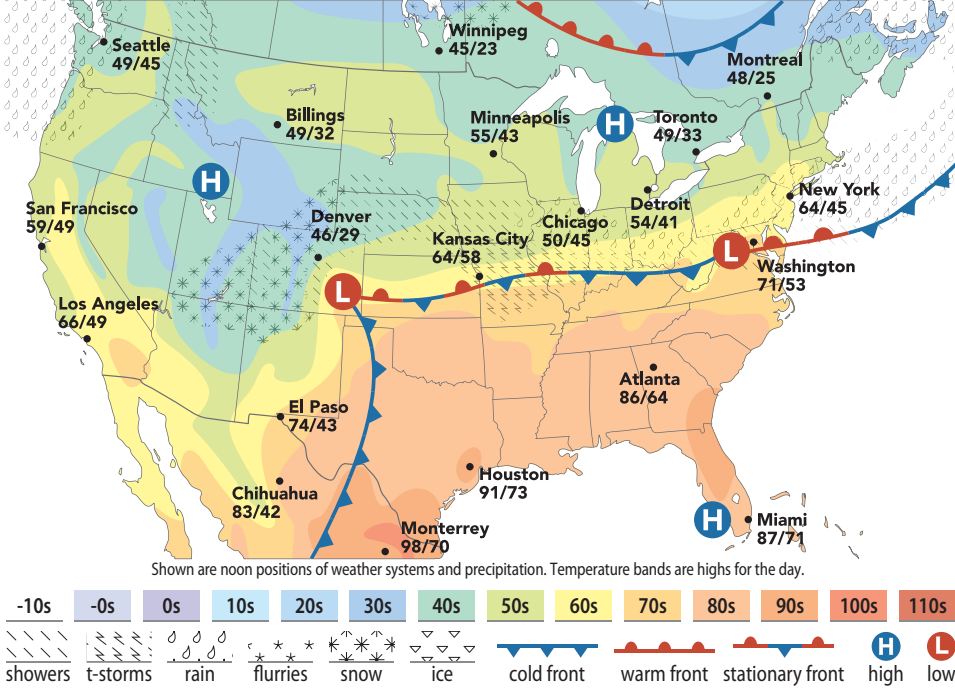
PENDLETON through 3 p.m. yest.		
TEMP.	HIGH	LOW
Yesterday	53°	31°
Normals	57°	37°
Records	73° (2015)	21° (1913)
PRECIPITATION		
24 hours ending 3 p.m.	0.00"	
Month to date	0.61"	
Normal month to date	1.18"	
Year to date	4.67"	
Last year to date	5.89"	
Normal year to date	3.73"	
HERMISTON through 3 p.m. yest.		
TEMP.	HIGH	LOW
Yesterday	56°	31°
Normals	60°	36°
Records	82° (1960)	20° (1955)
PRECIPITATION		
24 hours ending 3 p.m.	Trace	
Month to date	0.12"	
Normal month to date	0.76"	
Year to date	0.48"	
Last year to date	3.56"	
Normal year to date	3.03"	
WINDS (in mph)		
	Today	Sat.
Boardman	WSW 10-20	WSW 7-14
Pendleton	WSW 8-16	WSW 7-14
SUN AND MOON		
Sunrise today	6:44 a.m.	
Sunset tonight	7:17 p.m.	
Moonrise today	8:30 a.m.	
Moonset today	10:46 p.m.	

NATIONAL EXTREMES

Yesterday's National Extremes: (for the 48 contiguous states)

High 107° in Zapata, Texas Low 2° in Yellowstone Lake, Wyo.

NATIONAL WEATHER TODAY



Jobless claims soar in Oregon from layoffs due to COVID-19

By GILLIAN FLACCUS
AND ANDREW SELSKY
Associated Press

PORTLAND — Jobless claims are soaring in Oregon as the state nears the end of its first week under Gov. Kate Brown’s stay-at-home order due to the coronavirus outbreak, the Oregon Department of Employment said Thursday.

Since March 15, the state has received 76,500 initial unemployment claims. That’s a sharp increase from the 4,900 claims the week of March 8, before the economic devastation of the new coronavirus took hold, the department said.

Hospitality and leisure jobs made up about half the 22,800 claims processed in the last week, signifying the impact of the executive order that banned dine-in service at restaurants and bars and banned non-essential travel. Schools are also closed until April 28.

And as health-care workers struggle to find sufficient

masks to protect themselves, a medical facility in Salem, Oregon, announced online that it would hand out kits on Thursday for people to make masks and return them assembled.

The response was enormous.

So many cars lined up to receive the kits at a parking lot of a closed Kmart store that it caused a traffic jam. Police warned motorists of the snarled traffic.

“How do I get in?” one woman asked a volunteer through her rolled-down window before she was told all the masks had been pledged to motorists who arrived earlier. One man came on foot, after having abandoned his car in the traffic jam, and was told the same thing.

Salem Health Hospitals & Clinics cancelled its handouts for Friday because supplies were exhausted.

“We were overwhelmed by the response from the community in this time of need. Thank you so very

much for your willingness to help health care workers, neighbors and friends,” the facility said on its website.

A volunteer said hundreds of kits were handed out, enough to make more than 8,000 masks. It takes a half-hour to make each one at first, then the process speeds up as the maker gets familiar with the process. Dropoffs of completed masks are scheduled to start on Monday.

The impact of COVID-19 was also being felt by employers and their workers. Deschutes Brewery, an iconic craft brewery, also said Wednesday that it will lay off 300 employees and close its pubs and tasting rooms. Other uniquely Oregon businesses, such as McMenamin’s and Powell’s Books, have laid off hundreds of workers as well.

Oregon’s jobless rate was at a historic low last month of just 3.3%, but recent warnings have suggested unemployment could rise as high as 20% during the outbreak.

BRIEFLY

OHSU hotline to answer COVID-19 questions

PORTLAND — People concerned about a cough or fever can soon call an Oregon Health & Science University COVID-19 hotline that doctors hope will help people figure out what’s going on and reduce the burden on health care workers.

A \$1.6 million donation will help launch the COVID-19 hotline, by covering the costs of dedicated phone lines and computers, as well as training for

hotline staff, OHSU spokeswoman Amanda Gibbs told *The Oregonian*/OregonLive. The donation came from the Andrew and Corey Morris-Singer Foundation.

Gibbs said patients who call the hospital will have the option to be routed directly to the new hotline. The hotline will be staffed by medical professionals who will triage the concerns of callers who think they may be sick with the virus.

Gibbs said hospital administrators don’t yet know exactly when the service will start, but said it will eventually be made avail-

able to most of OHSU’s clinics for at least the next three months. She said OHSU is looking into extending the service to text and email.

“The hotline and telemedicine service will also help prevent OHSU’s primary care system from becoming overwhelmed during the COVID-19 pandemic, and will help prevent primary care clinics, urgent care and emergency departments from becoming overcrowded with patients who could more appropriately be treated with telemedicine services,” Gibbs said.

— Associated Press

CORRECTIONS: The *East Oregonian* works hard to be accurate and sincerely regrets any errors. If you notice a mistake in the paper, please call 541-966-0818.

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