

EAST OREGONIAN

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WINNER OF THE 2020 ONPA GENERAL EXCELLENCE AWARD

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Legislators reflect on special session

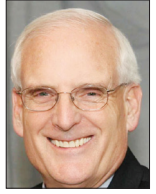
By **JADE MCDOWELL**
East Oregonian

SALEM — The Oregon Legislature's third and final special session of the year was "definitely memorable," said Rep. Greg Smith, R-Heppner.



Barreto

As the Legislature met inside the Oregon Capitol on Monday, Dec. 21, with masks and social distancing, protesters attempted to force their way into the building after being denied access due to COVID-19 restrictions.



Hansell

Oregon State Police declared the protest, organized by the right-wing group Patriot Prayer, an unlawful gathering and arrested four protesters for trespassing and disorderly conduct.



Smith

Smith said there is "no place" for violence or destruction of public property, and he categorized the amount of taxpayer dollars used in the police response as "unfortunate."

He also said, however, that he felt with the technology and infrastructure available to the state there should be more public access to the Legislature during sessions conducted during the pandemic.

"I'm of the opinion this whole process could have been avoided," he said.

The Capitol building is not the Legislature, Smith said, and the Legislature is not required to meet there. He said he would have liked to see the Legislature make use of the spacious field houses of area colleges, with each chamber meeting in a separate athletic facility where observers could be safely accommodated with plenty of social distancing and ventilation. At minimum, he said, he would like to see people be allowed to make an appointment via Zoom to testify before committees.

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Final levee repair work begins

Contractors removing mill race from levee near Southeast Third

By **ANTONIO SIERRA**
East Oregonian

PENDLETON — Ten months after floods inundated Pendleton, the city is patching over one of the last areas where the Umatilla River

unexpectedly penetrated the city's flood defense system.

Contractors started repair work on Monday, Dec. 28, on the Pendleton levee near Southeast Third Street. Pendleton Public Works Director Bob Patterson said crews will extract an old arch contained within the levee before installing a new wall and applying grout to completely seal off that area of the levee from future high-water

events. The contractor expects to complete the project on Wednesday, Dec. 30.

In Pendleton, the February floods destroyed homes and damaged businesses, battering a community that was trying to withstand its second major flood in as many years.

The flood tested Pendleton's infrastructure, and water got through Pendleton's levee sys-

tem at two different points. On the west end of town, flood waters breached a levee near some industrial land, flooding Keystone RV Co. and Cor-Tek, forcing the large-scale employers to either curtail or suspend operations while they made repairs. The state eventually granted Pendleton \$1.8 million to repair that section of the levee.

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Rolling up their sleeves

Health care workers at St. Anthony, Good Shepherd start vaccinating

By **KATHY ANEY AND JADE MCDOWELL**
East Oregonian

PENDLETON — The atmosphere in the St. Anthony Hospital conference room on Monday, Dec. 28, was upbeat. Ten health care workers who waited there to receive the hospital's first coronavirus vaccinations could barely contain their elation.

"This is huge," said Dr. John McBee. "This is the beginning of the end of the pandemic."

Each person answered screening questions and signed a consent form.

McBee went forward first, sat down in the hot seat and rolled up his left sleeve. Tracy Wart, infection prevention nurse at St. Anthony, cleaned the surgeon's arm with alcohol and prepared the syringe.

"Ready?" Wart asked.

McBee nodded and the nurse slowly injected the vaccine into the surgeon's deltoid muscle.

"The first step to normalcy," he said after Wart withdrew the needle.

This initial session was a test drive of sorts using the contents of one 10-dose vial of the Moderna vaccine as a precursor to a full-scale vaccination of employees. St. Anthony President Harry Geller watched happily as he leaned against a wall.

"This is the light at the end of the tunnel," he said.



Ben Lonergan/East Oregonian

Dr. John McBee receives the first dose of the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine at St. Anthony Hospital in Pendleton on Monday, Dec. 28, 2020. The hospital began vaccinating staff on Monday morning and plans to continue to do so throughout the week.

"It's exciting."

Hospital employees aren't required to get vaccinated, but Geller hopes most will do so.

"It's not mandatory," he said. "(However), the care community, we've got to reach at least two-thirds vaccinated to get herd immunity. I think that'll happen over time as it rolls out. More and more people are getting comfortable with the idea of taking it."

The caveat, he said, is a new coronavirus mutation sweep-

ing through England that is more transmissible and harder to control. The variant might require an even higher percentage to reach herd immunity, maybe up to 90%. That might be a harder sell.

The health care workers in the conference room, however, were all in. Dr. Bill Powell, medical director in the hospital's emergency department, gave a hang loose sign hand sign as he got his injection. Powell said the vacci-

nation means he won't worry quite as much about bringing COVID-19 home to his family.

"I have a son with Down syndrome and heart disease," he said. "I've been trying hard not to expose him. Now there is less risk of taking it home."

Afterward, vaccine recipients received stickers that read, "I got my COVID vaccine." Each person was required to remain in the room for 15 min-

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'The purple unicorns of Pendleton' adjust to their new home

Mindy and Emily Arnold relocated from South Carolina to Umatilla County

Editor's Note: This story is part of an annual series by the East Oregonian called "Our New Neighbors," which introduces the community to people who have moved here in the past year.

By **ANTONIO SIERRA**
East Oregonian

PENDLETON — Mindy Arnold keeps a running checklist of things she wouldn't like to do

again, and moving cross-country during a pandemic is one of them.

Last summer, Mindy and Emily Arnold packed up their three children, two cats, one dog and two turtles into three cars to make the more than 2,500-mile journey from South Carolina to Pendleton.

On Day 1 of their move, the car driven by Tara, a family

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Ben Lonergan/East Oregonian

The Arnold Family, (from left) Sofia Guerrero, 18, Elyse Flores, 10, Bradley Arnold, 7, Emily Arnold and Mindy Arnold pose for a portrait with their dog, Nuckles, in the living room home of their Pendleton home on Saturday, Dec. 19, 2020.

COVID-19 NUMBERS IN UMATILLA COUNTY

TOTALS FOR WEEK ENDING 12/27/20



RISK LEVEL HIGH	NEW WEEKLY CASES 514	TOTAL CASE GOAL 40	OR LESS OVER 2 WEEKS	POSITIVE TEST RATE 11.4%	0.4%	POSITIVE TEST GOAL 5%
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