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EAST OREGONIAN

FEBRUARY 27-28, 2021

145th Year, No. 57

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Umatilla County to see vaccine surge

State revising county's weekly vaccination allotment from 700 to 2,400 vaccine doses

By **BRYCE DOLE AND ANTONIO SIERRA**
East Oregonian

UMATILLA COUNTY — Mired near the bottom of the state's vaccination rates, Umatilla County is ramping up its vaccination operations.

On the same day Gov. Kate Brown announced the state was expanding vaccination eligibility over the next several months, Umatilla County Public Health Director Joe Fiumara learned that Oregon Health Authority was revising the county's next vaccination allotment up from 700 to 2,400 doses.

"This will be a huge jump in vaccines from what we had," he said. The allocation will include 1,600 first doses of the Moderna vaccine and 800 second doses. The state is

also sending an additional 300 doses to the Mirasol Family Health Center in Hermiston.

New possibilities to speed vaccination schedules

Previously frustrated by inconsistent vaccine allocations, Fiumara said OHA gave the county assurance that the upcoming shipment represented a new floor for future vaccine allotments.

If a steady increase of vaccine supply holds true, Fiumara said the county could accelerate its schedule

for vaccine operations.

Brown announced on Friday, Feb. 26, that the state intended to expand vaccine eligibility to younger age groups over the next four months, culminating on July 1, when the state expects all Oregonians 16 and older who want the vaccine will have access to it.

To meet the demand, Fiumara said the county plans to continue holding mass vaccine clinics multiple times per week in the coming

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FEDERAL STIMULUS

Residents could see increase in tax bill

Nearly 900,000 Oregonians affected, state lawmakers consider a solution

By **MIKE ROGOWAY**
The Oregonian

SALEM — Last year's federal stimulus payments will generate \$112 million in additional Oregon taxes because of a quirk in state tax law.

The taxes will hit 877,000 Oregonian taxpayers, about half of all those who received federal stimulus payments in 2020 and early in 2021, according to the state. They would owe an average of about \$130 apiece, including many lower income workers who would owe \$100 or more.

Lawmakers from both parties say that's unfair, and the Oregon Legislature is examining a fix that would wipe out the higher tax bill. But with the April tax filing date already fast approaching it's not clear there's consensus to make a change.

Here's why this is happening: In March 2020, Congress authorized \$1,200 in stimulus checks for adults and an additional \$500 for children, with the amount declining for wealthier taxpayers. A second round authorized in December 2020, and paid early in 2021, paid \$600 per adult and another \$600 per child — again, with the totals declining in more affluent households.

The stimulus payments were structured as a tax rebate, which means they aren't subject to federal or state income taxes. But Oregon is one of six states that allow taxpayers to deduct a portion of their federal tax payments from their state income taxes.

Most years, the deduction functions as a state tax break. But when the feds are handing out free money, it reduces the size of that break. A lower federal tax bill means there's

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Hansell



Ben Lonergan/East Oregonian

Rod This wheels a hand truck filled with boxes of donated food into the Pendleton VFW Post No. 922 on Thursday, Feb. 25, 2021.

Helping others

Pendleton VFW partners with American Military Encouragement Network to deliver food to local veterans in need

By **BEN LONERGAN**
East Oregonian

PENDLETON — A small group of local veterans is lending a helping hand to aid hungry veterans.

Veterans with Pendleton's Veterans of Foreign Wars Let'er Buck Post No. 922 gathered on Thursday, Feb. 25, to unload nearly 180 boxes of donated food for local veterans in need. The delivery, donated by the American Military Encour-

agement Network (AMEN), consisted of 150 nonperishable food boxes — weighing roughly 46 pounds each — and 30 USDA Farm to Families perishable food boxes.

Judith Burger, the commander of the Pendleton VFW post, was among those helping to unload and distribute the food to local veterans.

"For me personally, it's amazing. Feeding people is one of my passions and for everybody here, knowing that this is going

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WHO TO CONTACT

Judith Burger, commander of the Pendleton VFW Let'er Buck Post No. 922, said she expects to have somewhere between 30 and 40 boxes of food remaining and said veterans and their families are welcome to contact her to arrange to pick up food boxes as supplies last. She can be reached by email at vfw922.burger@gmail.com, or by calling the VFW post at 541-278-2720.

Winter storms bury bird rehab center in snow

Blue Mountain Wildlife assesses storm damage

By **TAMMY MALGESINI**
For the East Oregonian

PENDLETON — As many in the region recently spent time clearing their sidewalks and driveways, Blue Mountain Wildlife was assessing the

damage caused by a series of weather systems that dumped record snowfall in the Pendleton area.

In her weekly online journal newsletter on the nonprofit organization's website, Executive Director Lynn Tompkins initially was counting her blessings.

"I'm feeling pretty lucky today," she wrote in her Feb. 8-14 entry. Tompkins said while they had more

than a foot of snow on the ground with two-foot drifts, she was grateful to still have power, as many Oregonians on the west side of the state weren't as fortunate.

Little did Tompkins know, the worst was yet to come. As the storm lingered, she said their snow removal efforts were hampered by the drifting snow on top of the Scavenger Pen — a 48-foot long greenhouse frame

with metal roof — as well as having to navigate a ditch near the structure.

"That's the most snow we've had since we've been here," Tompkins said. "It came all at once and we just couldn't keep up with it."

However, Tompkins maintained an upbeat attitude. The facility's director was counting her blessings.

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