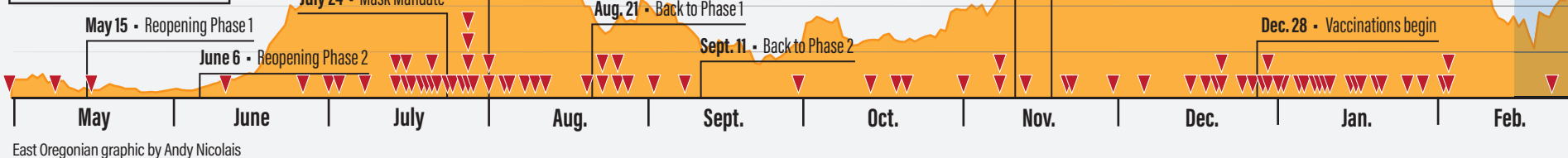


### UMATILLA COUNTY COVID-19 TREND - AS OF FEB. 26

Umatilla County cases: **7,639** (131\* new cases this week) \*72 of these are due to reconciliation of past cases.  
 Umatilla County deaths: **82** (2 new deaths reported this week)  
 Oregon cases: **154,878** (2,688 new cases this week)  
 Oregon deaths: **2,206** (57 new deaths reported this week)

Umatilla County vaccinations: **3,341** in progress, **4,191** complete (as of 12:01 a.m. 2/26/2021)

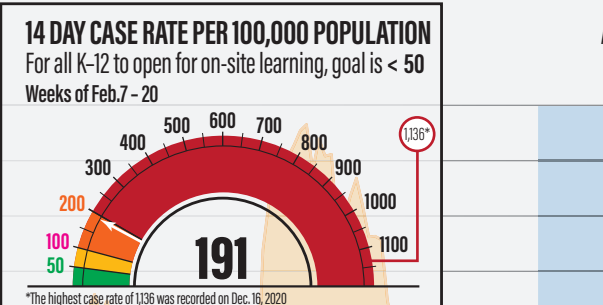
**LEGEND**  
 7 DAY AVERAGE DEATHS LAST 10 DAYS\*  
\*Cases in this time period may not yet be reported  
 SOURCES: OREGON HEALTH AUTHORITY, UMATILLA COUNTY HEALTH



**TEST POSITIVITY RATE**  
 For all K-12 to open for on-site learning, goal is < 5%  
(Number of positive tests divided by number of people tested)

Time Period	Umatilla County	Oregon
Feb. 7 - 20	9.5%	3.4%
Jan. 31 - Feb. 13	10.3%	3.8%
Jan. 24 - Feb. 6	12.6%	4.8%

Source: Oregon Health Authority. Percentages may change week to week as data is updated.



East Oregonian graphic by Andy Nicolais

## Hermiston residents recognized at Distinguished Citizens Awards

By **JADE MCDOWELL**  
 East Oregonian

HERMISTON — As Cindy Middleton accepted Hermiston’s Woman of the Year award on Wednesday, Feb. 24, she thought back to the day in 1992 that her father called her while she was away at college to tell her that her own mother, Judy Bracher, was Woman of the Year.

“I was deeply touched by the way that Dad described what Mom was being recognized for,” she remembered.

Middleton was one of several people recognized during the Hermiston Chamber of Commerce’s annual Distinguished Citizens Awards banquet, along with Ken Huber as Man of the Year. The event, which usually hosts several hundred people in the Hermiston Community Center, was limited to award winners and their families this year and was held in a greenhouse at Bennett Botanical Gardens.

Lou Ann Wolfe presented the Woman of the Year award to Middleton, whom Wolfe described as a leader constantly serving others. She said Middleton exemplifies Mother Theresa’s admonishment to “give your hands to serve and your heart to love.”

Middleton has been heavily involved in Special Olympics, including serving on the state advisory board for the organization, and started Hermiston and Tri-Cities versions of iCan Bike, which teaches special needs children how to ride a bicycle. She had volunteered with 4-H and FFA, sat on a number of organizations’



Ben Lonergan/East Oregonian

**Cindy Middleton delivers her acceptance speech after winning Woman of the Year at the annual Hermiston Distinguished Citizens Awards on Wednesday, Feb. 24, 2021.**

committees and serves as an officer on the boards of the Greater Hermiston Community Foundation and the Good Shepherd Community Health Foundation.

Middleton said she was deeply honored by the award, although she joked she didn’t know how she felt about being the person chosen to represent 2020 specifically.

Man of the Year Hermiston’s 2020 Man of the Year was Ken Huber, owner and operator of Burns Mortuary.

Huber’s son, Andrew Huber, presented the award. He said his father has been helping families through the most trying times of their lives for more than 25 years now in Hermiston, often going above and beyond to do so. He said people often stop him around town to tell him what his father’s kindness has meant to them when

they lost a loved one.

As Ken accepted the award, he said he hates to be in the spotlight, but felt honored to be recognized.

“I had no idea over 25 years ago when I came to Hermiston what a special community this is,” he said. “This is a community that everyone pitches in when there’s a need. If they’re asked, they’re right there, and more importantly when they’re not asked, they’re right there.”

Business of the Year The Bob Severson Rotary Business of the Year award was presented to M&M Potato, Inc. of Hermiston.

Presenter Dennis Barnett said owner Jake Malmberg started the business as a side gig in 1980 as he worked a second day job.

“No employees, just himself and little sleep,” Barnett said.

In accepting the award, Malmberg said he lives by two rules: It’s better to give than receive, and treat other people the way you want to be treated.

“I’ve tried to model that way in my life,” he said.

#### Merit of Honor

The Merit of Honor award, given to honor service and leadership in the community, went to Doug Alvarez.

Alvarez, who was not present, was recognized via



Ben Lonergan/East Oregonian

**Ken Huber, owner of Burns Mortuary, delivers his acceptance speech for Man of the Year at the Hermiston Distinguished Citizens Awards at Bennett Botanical Gardens in Hermiston on Wednesday, Feb. 24, 2021.**

video by family members who expressed how proud they were of Alvarez, along with photos of an earlier presentation of the award.

Alvarez volunteers as operations director for the Agape House and Eastern Oregon Mission, and helps coordinate the backpack program for schools to send extra food home with students in need on week-ends.

#### Educator of the Year

Hermiston School District’s educators of the year were also recognized via video in order to reduce the number of attendees at

this year’s banquet due to COVID-19 restrictions.

The districtwide 2020 Educator of the Year was Roger Berger, a career technical education teacher for Hermiston School District.

Superintendent Tricia Mooney said Berger has been a fierce advocate for students and tries hard to find new ways to get students involved.

“You have almost single-handedly grown all of our CTE programs with your passion for our kids and for opportunities for kids,” she said in a video where she surprised Berger in his classroom with a basket of candy.

### LOCAL BRIEFING

#### Umatilla County reports one new COVID-19 death

PENDLETON — Umatilla County Public Health announced one new COVID-19-related death on Friday, Feb. 26, according to a press release.

Umatilla County’s 82nd death with COVID-19 is a 55-year-old male who tested positive on Jan. 28 and died on Feb. 23 at Legacy Emanuel Medical Center in Portland, according to the press release.

#### HSD announces dates for return of secondary students

HERMISTON — Hermiston School District’s middle school students are expected to return to the classroom part time on March 22, with high school students starting hybrid instruction on April 12 if COVID-19 numbers stay down.

The district announced the new schedule on Thursday, Feb. 25, adding to previously announced dates for second and third graders to start hybrid learning on March 1 and fourth and fifth graders on March 8. The scheduled start to hybrid learning for each level depends on how well the Hermiston ZIP code’s COVID-19 case counts stay in line with Oregon Health Authority guidelines.

While secondary students will also attend in person for half days, times will differ

from the elementary school schedule. Students living in the walk zone will attend in person from 8:25 a.m. to 11:20 a.m., and students living in the bus zone will attend in person from 12:30 p.m. to 3:25 p.m. On Fridays, students will work on school work from home.

“With case counts continuing to decline, we are excited to open our middle schools and see our students face to face,” Superintendent Tricia Mooney said in a statement. “This wouldn’t be possible without the community’s support and everyone doing their part to help reduce Hermiston ZIP code case counts.”

#### COVID-19 testing starts Feb. 27 at new locations

HERMISTON — Free COVID-19 testing will be available every weekend through the end of August, starting Saturday, Feb. 27.

Testing will be available at Umatilla Electric Cooperative’s Hermiston office at 750 W. Elm St. in Hermiston on Feb. 27 from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m., and at UEC’s Boardman office on 400 N.E. Eldridge Drive from 3-6 p.m. on Sunday, Feb. 28, according to a news release from UEC. Tests will continue to be available at UEC’s offices the second and fourth weekend of each month.

Tests are also available the first and third Saturday of each month at Umatilla High School, 1400 Seventh St. in Umatilla, from 10 a.m.

to 1 p.m., and Atkinson Staffing, 80796 N. Highway 395 in Hermiston, from 3 p.m. to 6 p.m.

Testing is free and open to everyone.

#### Council could pave way for dockless, electric scooters

PENDLETON — If approved by the city council, the city of Pendleton could soon open the door for a new way to get about town: dockless electric scooters.

At a Tuesday, March 2, Pendleton City Council meeting, members will hold two first readings for ordinances that would create rules around the scooters for use on public roads and in parks.

According to a staff report from City Attorney Nancy Kerns, the city has been approached by an “international company” about applying for a business license to locate dockless electric scooters in Pendleton.

“These vehicles are rented by riders via a cellphone app,” she wrote. “The rider rents a vehicle where the rider finds it, and leaves the vehicle at the location of rider’s destination.”

The first reading at the March 2 meeting would set up the council to vote on the two ordinances on March 16.

The council meeting will be held at council chambers in city hall, 500 S.W. Dorion Ave. The meeting can also be viewed online via Zoom.

—EO Media Group

**DEAR WINTER, WE'RE NOT SCARED OF YOU. SEE YOU IN THE SNOW.**

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