

## Nutcracker: ‘Heritage Station is a community space, and we want it to be seen that way’

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need for the dance group and presented an opportunity to utilize the facilities in a way in which it was designed.

“Heritage Station is a community space, and we want it to be seen that way,” she said. “My goal has been to ensure that the community knows that they are welcome here and to encourage a broader use of our facilities.”

Also, Gruenhagen has a personal connection with ballet, as her daughter has danced under Sneden-Carlson for more than a dozen years. As a dance mom, Gruenhagen’s involvement has included everything from sewing and selling tickets to moving props and providing exposure through social media.

Sneden-Carlson was planning on four performances. However, to stay within indoor restrictions, the audience would be whittled down from the usual 1,200 at the BMCC theatre to 50 per show. Ticket prices, she said, were set at the admission to get into the museum.

“I already knew that I would be taking a big financial loss with this show. But I felt the benefits far outweighed the negatives,” Sneden-Carlson said. “The kids needed this so much.”

Samantha Mahaffy, who started in ballet at age 7, has participated in PBT productions of “The Nutcracker” for a decade. The 30-year-old said there were many reasons why it was important to participate in the pandemic performance.

“It’s not only my love but it was a chance to be a part of something incredible, to show our community and the youth in this program resilience,” Mahaffy said. “I think it was also important to have a little bit of a win in 2020.”

Madison Gruenhagen, 16, said one of the biggest take-aways was learning to adapt. Dancers, she said, are used to changes and setbacks, but 2020 was truly a new experience for everyone.

“I also feel that even though we were social distancing it brought many of us closer together as a group



Amanda Sauer/Contributed Photo

Rylee and Chris Demianew set up Drosselmeyer’s Toy Shop in the front window of A Piece of Pendleton.

and ultimately as a family,” Madison said.

Mahaffy agreed, saying, “I think we all gained a deeper understanding and gratitude for why we dance and without a question we are all even closer because of this experience.”

Recognizing that novel coronavirus restrictions could change at any time, Sneden-Carlson and Gruenhagen discussed backup plans. However, when Gov. Kate Brown announced a two-week freeze beginning in mid-November 2020, Sneden-Carlson was forced to reinvent the show yet again.

The former professional ballerina-turned ballet teacher spends a lot of time staying abreast on a number of large professional companies. Based on what many of them were doing with livestreaming their shows, Sneden-Carlson thought maybe she could, too. That idea, she said, morphed into the creation of a DVD that people could watch over and over.

### Lights, camera, action

While researching filming companies, Sneden-Carlson was referred to J.J. Hill, who co-owns La Grande-based The Big Productions with Alan Arson and owns Cabbage Hill Productions in Pendleton. Sneden-Carlson appreciated The Big Productions’ mission of “telling stories with light and sound.” She described working with them as “a delight.”

COVID-19 restrictions required most of the filming to be done outdoors. Everyone agreed that the cold weather was a constant challenge. Madison said she and other participants had to wear “as much warm clothing as possible.”

Sneden-Carlson was thrilled with the work of “expert seamstress Gloriajean McDonald,” who created 45 sparkly face masks, while production assistant Karen Odman helped in sewing additional capes. Sneden-Carlson also purchased gloves, leggings and long-sleeved T-shirts, and parents purchased jack-

### WHERE TO GET A COPY

The 2020 production of The Nutcracker — which includes 45 dancers, ages 4 through adult, plus four narrators and two tour guides — features most of the original ballet. The DVD is \$30 and can be requested via the Pendleton Ballet Theatre’s Facebook page. For more information, call 970-261-5331.

ets for the younger dancers. In addition, the kids wore hats and scarves that looked appropriate with their costumes, Sneden-Carlson said.

While most of the filming was planned on the expansive museum grounds, Sneden-Carlson knew additional changes needed to be made. Dropping the “Clara’s Magical Journey” part of the show, she began working in some local history.

She approached several downtown Pendleton businesses for filming a few pieces that couldn’t be done outside in the winter elements. The idea received applause from the production crew.

“We enjoyed working with all the dancers, and our favorite part was capturing all the different parts at different locations around town,” Hill said.

The dancers, too, enjoyed the process. Madison said being filmed while dancing was new and different, especially the up close shots. Despite multiple challenges, she said it was a fun experience.

“It taught me to relax deeper into the journey instead of asking myself what the end goal was,” Mahaffy added. “It taught me how important it is to mourn the things we miss but to not sit in that feeling; as Julie says, ‘When a door closes, we look for a window.’”

## Virus: Change allows indoor gatherings of 10 people from four different households

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including Clatsop, Crook, Gilliam, Grant, Harney, Hood River, Lake, Lincoln, Morrow, Sherman, Wallowa, Wasco and Wheeler.

Umatilla County, however, did not see its status change, though cases have continued to decline on average. The county will remain at high risk until the metrics are reassessed in two weeks.

The change for Morrow allows indoor social gatherings at a maximum of 10 people from as many as four separate households. As many as 12 people can also gather outdoors, with no mentioned cap on households, according to state guidelines.

The change expands indoor and outdoor capacity for restaurants and extends closing hours to midnight. Indoor and outdoor recreation and facilities, entertainment establishments and religious gatherings can all expand capacity.

“My biggest hope is that it gives people hope,” Lindsay said, “and that they’ve seen some of the good actions they’ve taken working and that it will drive us into the last stage, which is the vaccination, and that they’ll get the vaccination and that we’ll get back to our lives.”

Lindsay added that, in light of the change, she remains concerned that the shift in risk category will cause the county to “let our guard down and start having larger gatherings and it will spread again and we’ll have the numbers increase and go backwards.”

Since the pandemic began last year, the

an Oregonian/Oregon-live database.

“We certainly don’t want to celebrate the numbers where they’re at with a big old festival where we all get together maskless, right?” Morrow County Commissioner Jim Doherty said. “Take it to heart, start breathing, and start looking around and understand that, look, the needle is moving and we’re moving the needle and there is a tomorrow.”



Doherty

Doherty said he is especially hopeful that the change will help the county’s Hispanic community, who have disproportionately impacted by the pandemic, at one point accounting for nearly 60% of the county’s reported cases despite making up approximately 38% of its population.

“They’re the backbone of Morrow County,” Doherty said, adding that Hispanic residents make up a large portion of the county’s agricultural workforce, which drives the county’s economy but has oftentimes placed workers at a greater risk of contracting the virus.

“In that family, they’ve got to be really feeling a weight coming off their shoulders,” Doherty said.

Doherty said county businesses will be among those that benefit most from the change. He added that with recent developments from the CDC, saying that vaccinated people can begin gathering indoors without social distancing and mask wearing, all signs are showing that things are moving in a positive direction.

“I think it’s a product of a lot of folks who have given up an awful lot,” Doherty said.

## Motel: ‘This is not a forever home’

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established as a part of its Operation Turnkey program. “It’s going to be quite the undertaking,” she said.

In the short term, Hall said CAPECO plans to run the building mainly as a shelter for the unhoused, a safe place where lodgers could socially distance themselves during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Once Umatilla County is able to get the pandemic under control, Hall said the building will retain some rooms as a night-to-night shelter while also dedicating other rooms to transitional housing, a place where the unhoused can live for up to two years while they search for permanent housing.

“This is not a forever home,” she said.

Hall said CAPECO had initially identified another property for its project, but when another nonprofit notified CAPECO about The Whiskey Inn, officials saw plenty to like. Although it was slightly more expensive than their original target, the building was in better condition and its central location put it within easy walking distance of the Umatilla County Courthouse, Lifeways and other services.

Hall said CAPECO also likes that the motel is prominently featured in a high-traffic area, which it expects will discourage congregation and illicit activity.

Hall knows the motel’s location in the heart of Pendleton will spark scrutiny from neighbors and other residents

who fear the facility’s presence will cause blight and illegal activity.

But Hall said CAPECO intends to continue to run the building like a motel, just with a shifting focus away from tourists and travelers and toward the unhoused. She added that the nonprofit will work diligently to make sure the building remains unblighted and will form a neighborhood committee to address concerns from nearby residents and businesses.

Hall said the new facility will be a good “first bite” at tackling the region’s homelessness issue, but leaders in the community will need to continue to address one of the issue’s main roots: a lack of affordable housing.

## Scoters: Users will need to send a picture of their parked scooter before finishing their ride

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Addressing concerns that scooters will litter sidewalks and impede pedestrians, Covato said users will need to send a picture of their parked scooter before finishing their ride. If the scooter is improperly parked, the app will ask the user to reposition it and send another picture as proof.

“It’s going to be new, but people will get used to it,” City Attorney Nancy Kerns said.

Kerns said she and other staff worked with Covato to iron out any safety concerns, including talks with Police Chief Chuck Byram.

After exhausting their questions, none of the councilors seemed to pose any objections to welcoming Bird scooters into Pendleton. The council will meet on Tuesday, March 16, to consider the ordinances that will allow electric scooters on streets and on the riverwalk.



Ben Lonergan/East Oregonian

A group of four Bird e-scooters sits parked along East Main Street in Hermiston on Wednesday, March 10, 2021. Bird, which recently began operations in Hermiston, is looking to expand to Pendleton.

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