



Kathy Aney/East Oregonian, File

**A biker roars onto the tarmac at the Eastern Oregon Regional Airport during the 2019 "Ride with the Raiders" event that was part of Pendleton Bike Week.**

## Bike: This is not the end of Bike Week

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Chute Out III flat track race have been postponed until (the) third week of July 2022," the website states.

In an interview, bike week owner Stuart Rice said the reasoning behind the decision was simple.

"Too many restrictions, not enough freedoms," he said.

Rice said he was among the event organizers that met with Gov. Kate Brown's office recently, but he said the staffers they spoke to seemed more concerned with another wave of COVID-19 that could hit the state in the coming months. He said some of the concepts that were discussed, like a 50% cap on audiences, wouldn't be feasible for something like the bike week concert.

Founded in 2015, Pendleton Bike Week, along with Pendleton Whisky Music Fest, was among a slate of new events that were supposed to help drive tourism in Pendleton in the months leading up to the Round-Up.

A multi-day event that featured multiple rides, a classic rock concert, a vendor area and more, Pendleton Bike Week had some success in its early years. As interest in bike week



Kathy Aney/East Oregonian, File

**A young "Biker in Training" stands with his dad during speeches at the Pendleton Convention Center preceding the "Ride with the Raiders" event that was part of the 2019 Pendleton Bike Week.**

began to flag, Rice, the owner of the Midway Bar & Grill in Hermiston, took over the event with the idea of revamping it. Among his ideas was moving the hub of the rally from the Pendleton Convention Center to the Round-Up Grounds and making the event more affordable.

But Rice has never had a chance to put his ideas into action. Organizers had to cancel the 2020 event because of COVID-19 and are now doing it again in 2021.

As it stands now, Pendleton tourism season offers a checkered calendar.

Some events, like the Jackalope Jamboree and the Pendleton Cattle Barons, are already committed to reviving their events with added safety precautions.

Whisky Fest still has its July 10 concert date on the schedule, but organizers are still waiting for more certainty from the governor's office before they can feel confident in that date.

And Pendleton's ultimate event, the Round-Up,

is projecting confidence in holding a full event in September, although the details of how they will operate are still under wraps.

Despite a two-year gap, Rice said Pendleton Bike Week will not end permanently because of the pandemic.

The hope is that organizers can put on a full event in 2022 with the goal of putting on a rally free of COVID restrictions.

"We want to put on an event that we can be proud of," he said.

## Risk: Diligence is still needed to curb the surge

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reports some of the lowest COVID-19 case counts since the pandemic began. Only 25 cases were reported in Umatilla County last week, which is the lowest total since last spring, according to Joe Fiumara, the county's public health director.

"If you'd asked me a week ago if we were going to be here, I don't think it would have been this soon," he said. "We had really low (cases) last week, and that's what allowed us to come in under" moderate risk.

Fiumara said that a number of things could be contributing to the relatively low case count, including mask wearing, social distancing and a lack of community spread. However, he added that it's also possible the county has reached a level of immunity because so many people have contracted the virus.

### Statewide surge brings concerns

In the past two weeks, average daily cases have reached the highest total statewide in seven weeks and have increased by 54%. Active hospitalizations have grown 53% in that same time frame. On Monday, April 5, the state reported 177 active hospitalizations — the highest total since February.

"We are at a critical moment in this pandemic as we face more contagious



Ben Lonergan/East Oregonian

**A billboard along Southgate in Pendleton advises drivers of the Umatilla County's high coronavirus risk level on Wednesday, April 7, 2021. The county will move to moderate risk level, effective Friday, April 9, 2021.**

variants of COVID-19 taking hold in our communities," Gov. Kate Brown said in a press release on April 6.

With cases surging statewide, there remains concern among county health officials that relaxing restrictions could spur a case spike, bringing the county right back where it was before.

"It's a reminder that, while we're heading in the right direction right now, it can turn quickly," Fiumara said. "People need to keep with it so that we don't end up in that mode that we've been before, moving backwards. We've been down that road before and we're

trying to avoid it."

Murdock noted that keeping local case counts down and bringing the vaccine to county residents will be essential to ensure that major events like the Pendleton Round-Up can be held this summer.

"I'm horrified at the prospect that we won't be in a position to have those events," he said, adding the events will bring much-needed economic relief to the county after a year of struggle. "We can't go two years without having them."

The difference between officials' latest concerns from the previous months

of the pandemic, however, is the presence of vaccines. With eligibility expanding to all Oregonians on April 19, and new shipments coming to the county each week, Fiumara said he is optimistic that vaccinations can help keep Umatilla County on track.

"Every time the rates have dropped and things have relaxed there wasn't a vaccine also being given that provided more long-term protection and ability for people to continue taking action on this," he said. "And we do have that now. And we're getting more and more of it."



Ben Lonergan/East Oregonian, File

**Staff at a COVID-19 mass vaccination clinic at the Sage Center in Boardman administer doses of the COVID-19 vaccine on Wednesday, March 24, 2021.**

## Vaccine:

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6, that all Oregonians over the age of 16 would be eligible to get a COVID-19 vaccine as of April 19 — two weeks earlier than the state's previous plan.

The change comes as new variants of the virus are spreading across the state, prompting what Brown has called "a race between vaccine distribution and the rapid spread of COVID-19 variants."

"Today, Oregon will pass the threshold of 2 million vaccine doses administered," Brown said on April 6. "And yet, in communities across Oregon, COVID-19 is spreading at concerning rates."

Lindsay said although the county has reported fewer cases lately, surges in Morrow County in the past have typically been delayed by a few weeks.

"I can see the ball rolling at us, and this is our opportunity," she said. "We've got some great help. We've got federal and state help. And as a small county that's so important. And if we can't get people to realize (the vaccine is) safe and come get it, then we're back to high and extreme and shutdowns" more quickly.

County officials are now reaching out to local media outlets to bring more people to the clinic, Lindsay said. Health officials have also been focusing outreach efforts at the Hispanic community — who have been hit hardest by the pandemic — by using Spanish radio stations and social media platforms to inform them of the clinics, Lindsay said.

The county has also been reaching out to local food processing facilities and agricultural workplaces, where

infection has been known to spread rapidly, to encourage workers there to get the shot. Lindsay said getting the single-shot Johnson & Johnson vaccine is especially important for workers who cannot take time off from work.

"That's who we wanted to get to with the one-shot opportunity," she said.

The county is one of the few in Oregon that have received large shipments of the Johnson & Johnson vaccines due to the company's recent distribution issues, Lindsay said. She added that the "one dose option may see some delays over the next few weeks to a month."

This month's clinics are being run by county health officials, the Oregon Health Authority and the Federal Emergency Management Agency. The federal agency has provided support in the form of staffing and facilities to prepare vaccines at the clinic.

The Morrow County clinics are one of three that are receiving assistance from FEMA nationwide, and the only one happening on the West Coast, Lindsay said.

Anybody over the age of 18 is eligible to receive a free shot at the clinics, Lindsay said, and appointments are not required. She described operations as "quick and easy and we have had minimal lines."

The first effort in Boardman concluded on April 6 at the SAGE Center.

The second effort will be held at AC Houghton Elementary School in Irrigon on Friday, April 9, from 1-7 p.m. and Saturday, April 10, from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m.

The third will be at the Morrow County Fairgrounds in Heppner on Monday, April 12, from 1-7 p.m. and Tuesday, April 13, from 7 a.m. to 1 p.m.

## Action:

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resources for the project.

The film focuses on the lives of four characters — Craig-Allen's character, Anna, a Native American girl in the foster care system and her new foster mother, Lucy, and Dekin's character, Boyd, a white boy with low intellect but a positive attitude and his new foster mother, Peg. The four go out into the wilds of Idaho for a weekend of hiking and horseback riding. In the process they each face their own senses of longing for love and meaningful relationships.

The movie isn't necessarily about the foster system or being Native American, but those themes play into the story.

Director Jonny Lewis, playing with contrasts besides the two teen characters' personalities, cast Craig-Allen, of Umatilla and Nez Perce heritage, to pair up with Carney, who is white.

"We don't usually see Native Americans in film or TV unless it's about a Native American story. But why not just show a Native as a regular person like everyone else," Lewis said.

Craig-Allen said she and Lewis have been doing background work on what it's like to be a foster child.

"I have seen my friends and other people around me in foster care and their experience," she said.

In addition to her own interactions, Craig-Allen said the director, Lewis, has done what she called "deep research" into the

foster care system.

"Dekin's and my characters are two examples of kids in foster care," she said.

The film is not about what's wrong with the foster system, or the troubles of Native Americans, Lewis said.

"We all know what's wrong with this world, but I wanted people to feel a little better about life after watching our movie. I confess, it's a feel-good movie," he said.

Comedy, like life, Lewis said, is all about making mistakes.

"But if you truly care about the people you're with, forgiveness and understanding poke their noses through from time to time," he said.

Lewis, who hails from Michigan, has made a couple dozen short films, but this is his first full-length film. Besides help from the Allens, he is working with Jeanette Yoffe, a former foster care social worker, who has been advising on the film.

Yoffe, a former foster child, will be playing a social worker in the film.

Though Lewis is bringing a small but professional crew, he invited locals to help with the production, like 15-year-old First Nations girl Kiya Bruno, to work as part of the crew.

"Kiya auditioned for the role of Anna, and didn't get the part, but she mentioned that when she's on a film set, she's always checking out the camera angles," he said. "That told me she's sharp enough to help out on our crew, so she's going to be our script supervisor. That's a big responsibility, so of course we'll help her with it."