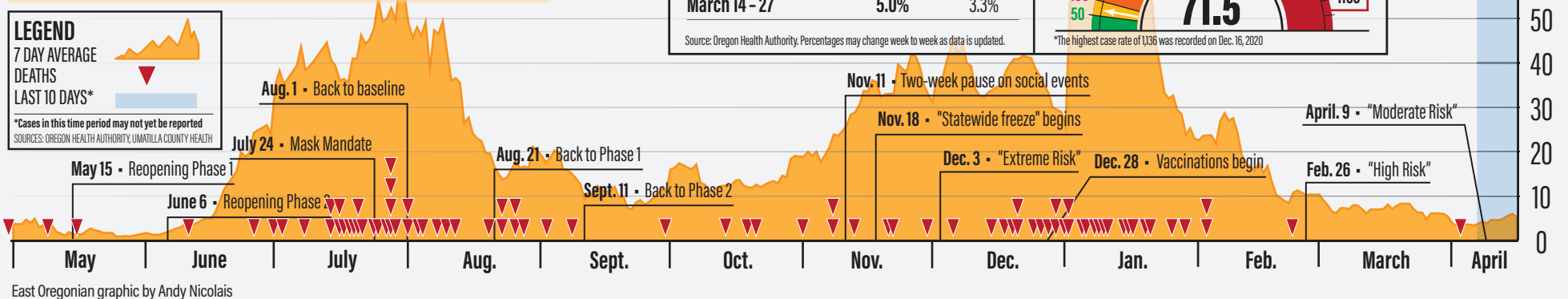


UMATILLA COUNTY COVID-19 TREND - AS OF APRIL 16

Umatilla County cases: **7,952** (39 new cases this week)
 Umatilla County deaths: **83** (0 new deaths reported this week)
 Oregon cases: **173,626** (4,288 new cases this week)
 Oregon deaths: **2,457** (17 new deaths reported this week)

Umatilla County vaccinations: **3,950** in progress, **14,081** complete (as of 12:01 a.m. 4/16/2021)



StoryWalk combines exercise, literacy in Umatilla

Grant from University of Pittsburgh helps fund project

By **JADE MCDOWELL**
East Oregonian

UMATILLA — Story time for Umatilla children now comes with a dose of Vitamin D.

Families were out enjoying the sunshine on Wednesday, April 14, during the grand opening of Umatilla's StoryWalk. The new installation features metal stands spaced about 200 feet apart along the trail from Hash Park to Kiwanis Park in McNary. Each stand contains a large replica of a page from a children's picture book, allowing children to read the story while going for a walk.

Sierra Dugan took her three children to the grand opening, and her daughter Elina Dugan, who will turn 4 in a couple of weeks, studied each plaque as they walked.

"She loves outdoors and reading, so this is perfect," Sierra said.

She said she liked that the



Amelia Schell-Murphy, 3, points to a sign along the StoryWalk in McNary as Amber Dixon reads the sign to her on the first day of Umatilla's StoryWalk on Wednesday, April 14, 2021.

trail was wide and paved, making it easy for toddlers to walk on, or to push a stroller along.

"I like that you kind of go at your own pace," she said.

Amber Dixon, who brought her 3-year-old grand-

daughter along, watched as she ran up to each page eagerly, waiting for Dixon to read it to her. Dixon said she

lives nearby, and will probably visit the new feature often.

The Umatilla Public Library plans to swap out the book on a monthly basis. This month's book is "I Can Save the Earth" by Alison Inches.

Bella Oloendorff, 10, said she had fun reading the book as she walked, and plans to come back every time there is a new one.

"It taught you how to recycle and turn off the lights," she said, describing the book.

At the end of the trail, participants were given their choice of free books to choose from, a snack and an opportunity to make a bird feeder out of pine cones, peanut butter and bird seed.

Since "I Can Save the Earth" was shorter than some books that will be featured, the last few plaques featured information about Citizen Science Month, celebrated in April. Citizen science refers to public participation in gathering scientific data, such as precipitation monitoring for the National Weather Service. It encouraged people to download

the iNaturalist app, which helps people from all over the world upload photos and information about plant and animal species in their neighborhood.

A Citizen Science grant from the University of Pittsburgh helped fund the StoryWalk project, according to City Finance Director Melissa Ince. Children who participated in the grand opening received free books at the end of the trail, but starting with the next book featured, at the end of each story will be a Q code that people can scan with their smartphone to receive a free physical copy of the book featured that month.

Ince said a few other communities in the area, including Stanfield, recently installed StoryWalks of their own, so libraries will be able to exchange books with each other in addition to adding their own.

To participate in the StoryWalk, start with the first plaque at the entrance of Hash Park, 440 Pendleton Ave. in Umatilla, and follow the trail west to Kiwanis Park.

LOCAL BRIEFING

County residents up for state board, commission

SALEM — Gov. Kate Brown submitted a list of state board and commission appointments to the Oregon Senate for confirmation and three Umatilla County residents are up for consideration.

Kristin Williams, an Athena librarian, was appointed to a four-year term on the state library board. Jennifer Currin, a Pendleton attorney, was reappointed to a four-year term on the Oregon Liquor Control Commission, and John Scanlan, a Pendleton teacher, was appointed to the Public Employees Retirement Board.

"State board and commission members bring a diverse set of backgrounds and life experiences to address the wide range of issues currently facing state government," Brown said in a press release. "Their contributions help lead to policies and strategies that better enable us to serve and represent all Oregonians, especially as we continue to mitigate ongoing crises. I appreciate the willingness of all these nominees to serve our great state and help make Oregon better for all those who call it home."

The Senate Rules Committee is scheduled to consider the nominations the week of May 10.

Helix School District has new superintendent

HELIX — The Helix School District School Board hired a new superintendent and principal on Wednesday, April 14, according to a press release.

Brad Bixler, the Human Resources Director and Communications Specialist for the school district in

North Bend, Oregon, was approved for the position at an April 14 school board meeting, the press release said.



Bixler

Bixler's contract with the district begins on July 1, but he said he hopes to "begin connecting with staff and the community prior to July 1."

Bixler is a former employee of school districts throughout Eastern Oregon, working as a teacher, technology specialist, assistant principal, principal and human resources director across Umatilla and Morrow County for 26 years, the

press release said.

"We are confident Brad will be a long-term, community-involved, dedicated Superintendent/Principal," said Todd Thorne, chairman of the Helix School Board. "His diverse experience in large and small schools and school districts across the country provides unique value. His equity-based thinking, creative forward-thinking approach and ability to listen and collaborate with all stakeholders will serve the district well as we navigate our path forward."

Bixler said he's "looking forward to serving the students, staff and community for the 2021-22 school year."

— EO Media Group



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