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EAST OREGONIAN

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Oregon increase in COVID-19 cases leads country

More than half state's counties are considered 'high risk'

By **BRADLEY W. PARKS**

Oregon Public Broadcasting

SALEM — Oregon's seen the biggest increase in COVID-19 cases the past two weeks of any state in the country.

"A few weeks ago, I came before you to say that we were concerned we would have a fourth surge of COVID-19 in Oregon," Gov. Kate Brown said at a Friday, April 23, press conference. "Unfortunately, today, that surge is here."

Not enough people have been vaccinated and adherence to public health guidelines has fallen off a cliff, giving rise to virus transmission rates rivaling the worst days of the pandemic this

winter.

Oregon state epidemiologist Dr. Dean Sidelinger called it the "most pessimistic scenario." COVID-19 has continued its rapid spread this spring and, once again, threatens to overrun hospitals throughout the state.

"Our newest modeling indicates that the rate of transmission surpassed the most pessimistic scenario of three weeks ago," Sidelinger said. "And if that spread continues unabated, our hospitals risk

being swamped by virus-stricken patients."

More than half the state's counties are now considered "high risk" for COVID-19 transmission. Hotspots range from metro counties like Washington and Multnomah to more sparsely populated ones like Grant and Klamath.

Spread is so bad in some counties that they qualify for Oregon's "extreme risk" category, in which indoor dining is banned and indoor capacity at gyms, retail stores and

other businesses is extremely limited. State health officials said on April 23 they're even considering a pause on elective surgeries similar to the pandemic's early days.

Brown said she will reopen the extreme risk bucket as hospitals fill up — and could put several counties in that category as soon as next week.

The governor set the threshold for reopening the extreme risk category at 300 people hospitalized with

COVID-19; the state had 283 COVID-19 patients in hospitals as of April 23.

Inoculation for COVID-19 has hummed along in Oregon. Half of the state's adult population has received at least one dose, and more than 1 million Oregonians are fully vaccinated.

That's despite a nationwide pause on administration of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine due to six cases of

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EO SPOTLIGHT

'SERIOUS AND COMMITTED'

Umatilla County officials again push for jail renovations amid concerns for mental health, addiction treatment

By **BRYCE DOLE**

East Oregonian



Ben Lonergan/East Oregonian

Umatilla County Jail Cpt. Thoren Hearn indicates a transport holding cell that will be converted back to a sallyport under proposed renovations at the Umatilla County Jail. The transport holding cell would be relocated into a renovated part of the facility with a purpose-built room.

new detox, holding and medical cells, as well as cells that would accommodate inmates entering the facility in a transport situation and other upgrades to the jail's prebooking and intake area.

The renovations would also allow for a variety of social services like mental health and addiction counseling and treatment, officials say.

"I think it's going to be an incredible asset," Umatilla County Commissioner Dan Dorran said. "And I think it's going to leave an extreme void if" the project isn't completed.

Murdock was set to testify in front of state lawmakers at the Joint Ways and Means Subcommittee on April 17 regarding the jail renovation. The meeting was held remotely, and because of this, neither Murdock nor Shafer were given a chance to testify.

The commissioners submitted written testimonies for the projects meant to be presented, and now,

"we're blowing up the phones of our legislators," Shafer said, adding the project is now up against others that are vying for state funding, including local projects.

The county has already invested approximately \$250,000 into the project, officials say.

"We're shovel-ready," Murdock said. "We've done all the preliminary work. It should be clear to them that we're serious and committed."

Housing those in need

Law enforcement used to drop off arrestees suffering from a mental health crisis or addiction at facilities where they can recover, like the Blue Mountain Recovery Center. Many of these individuals are arrested on low-level offenses like trespassing or criminal mischief, officials say.

But when the facility closed in

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Pendleton School Board candidates make their case

LOCAL ELECTIONS 2021

By **ANTONIO SIERRA**
East Oregonian



Eagleheart



Gregg

PENDLETON — Change is coming to the Pendleton School Board.

With incumbents Gary George, Debbie McBee and Steve Umbarger all retiring at the end of June, nearly half of the board will change hands after the May 18 election. A wide field of candidates entered their names to fill the open seats, and for the first time in decades, each election will be contested.

All three races are at-large, meaning any voter living in the Pendleton School District will get a chance to weigh in on each race.

Over a series of interviews, the candidates not only shared their thoughts on how Pendleton schools have been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, but also how they plan to address long-standing issues, such as school funding and student equity.

Position 1

Beth Harrison and Rodney Thompson are at different stages of their involvement with the Pendleton School District, but each thinks their experiences will make them a good fit for the school board.

Harrison, who is vying with Thompson to replace Umbarger for the Position 1 seat, was born on an Army base in South Korea but grew up in Utah. After graduating with a master's degree from



GrosJacques



Harrison



Spencer



Thompson

the University of North Carolina, Harrison put her career aside to focus on raising her family in Pendleton.

She has seven children, five of whom still attend Pendleton schools, and Harrison spends some of her non-parenting time volunteering in the classroom and with various community organizations.

"I really enjoy children and the opportunities I've had to interact with them and I hope that that perspective could be useful," she said.

Thompson is a veteran and a retired locksmith, and although his children have long since graduated out of Pendleton schools, he thinks his experience working for a foreign exchange program

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Giving the gift of life

Good Shepherd Health Care System receives Hope Award from Pacific Northwest Transplant Bank

By **JADE MCDOWELL**
East Oregonian

HERMISTON — Organ donations are often born out of a day of deep sorrow for one family and great joy for another.

When a hospital does outstanding work in navigating such a difficult, yet lifesaving situation, the Pacific

Northwest Transplant Bank awards the Hope Award. Good Shepherd Health Care System was recognized on Thursday, April 22, for the work staff did in facilitating such a gift of life in November 2020.

Barbara Thompson, chair of the PNTB board of directors, said organ

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Jade McDowell/East Oregonian

Staff from Good Shepherd Health Care System and Pacific Northwest Transplant Bank show off the teardrop-shaped Hope Award, given to hospitals that show outstanding work in facilitating an organ donation.

COVID-19 NUMBERS IN UMATILLA COUNTY

CHI St. Anthony Hospital

TOTALS FOR WEEK ENDING 4/22/2021

RISK LEVEL MODERATE

NEW CASES OVER 2 WEEKS

118

TOTAL CASE GOAL

40

OR LESS OVER 2 WEEKS

POSITIVE TEST RATE

4.5%

1.7%

POSITIVE TEST GOAL

5%



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