

EAST OREGONIAN

TUESDAY, APRIL 27, 2021

145th Year, No. 82

WINNER OF THE 2020 ONPA GENERAL EXCELLENCE AWARD

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Demand for COVID-19 vaccine drops locally

Umatilla County administers less than 500 doses last week

By JADE MCDOWELL
East Oregonian

PENDLETON — As Umatilla County is likely headed back into the “high risk” category for COVID-19, the county is turning away vaccine allocations from the state because supply has outpaced demand.

MAKING AN APPOINTMENT

For information on vaccine clinics or to register for an appointment somewhere in Umatilla County, visit ucohealth.net/covid-events-new.

Umatilla County Public Health Director Joe Fiumara said the county told the state it could send last week’s allocation for Umatilla County to a county with higher demand, and will likely do so again this week.

“Our demand level is dropping dramatically,” he said.

Fiumara said Umatilla County Public Health currently has about 6,000 vaccine doses on hand, but is hearing from partners in the county that they don’t need more doses yet. Last week, the county itself administered less than 500 doses total, and

most of those were second doses. At some points during their most recent free clinic, Fiumara said, staff were just sitting and waiting around for anyone to arrive — a stark difference from the long lines a few weeks ago.

According to Oregon Health Authority’s vaccine dashboard, Umatilla County is the least vaccinated county in the state, with just 23% of its population at least partially vaccinated, compared with 41% statewide.

The dashboard shows an incom-

plete picture, however. Some Umatilla County residents have been vaccinated through federal vaccine allocations directly to the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, and information about those doses goes to the federal government before making its way to the state. Others have received the vaccine from the VA hospital in Walla Walla, Washington, which also takes longer to show up in the OHA database.

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Walk in their shoes

Domestic Violence Services holds ‘In Her Shoes’ walk to raise awareness of domestic violence, sexual abuse

By BRYCE DOLE
East Oregonian

HERMISTON — She was a 32-year-old accountant with a daughter. She was married, though he was not the father of her child. Slowly over time, their relationship soured.

It began with emotional abuse and escalated to physical abuse. Friends and family encouraged her to give him another chance. They said he was sorry. The decision loomed — stay or leave. She chose the latter.

She reported the abuse to the police. In court, she lost custody of her daughter because she worked full time. Then, she went to Child Protective Services. They didn’t find credible danger to the child and declined to help. She just wanted to be with her daughter. So, she took him back.

This was one of many scenarios that participants engaged with at the seventh annual “In Her Shoes” experiential walk outside of Good Shepherd Hospital in Hermiston on a blustery and gray Saturday, April 24.

The event, organized by Domestic Violence Services, a nonprofit that has served Umatilla and Morrow counties for more than 40 years, was intended to raise awareness about domestic violence and sexual abuse by having participants walk step-by-step through the obstacles victims commonly face when they seek help.

“It’s discouraging knowing that’s what people have to go through,” said Jessica Reker, the director of community health and outreach at

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East Oregonian, File

A firefighting air tanker drops a load of fire retardant into a draw in Harrington Canyon, southwest of Pilot Rock, as a large wildfire burned out of control in 2018.

Bracing for fires

Dry conditions in Northeast Oregon have fire officials preparing for a busy fire season

By KATY NESBITT
For the East Oregonian

PENDLETON — Despite rain showers over the weekend in much of Northeast Oregon, fire officials say the region is still ripe for wildfires.

“It’s dry,” said Joe Hessel, a forester for the Oregon Department of Forestry’s Northeast Oregon. “I think, statewide, Oregon Depart-

ment of Forestry protected lands have had four times the average number of fires.”

Not only are the number of fires higher for this time of year but, Hessel said, the number of acres burned is three times higher than normal.

So far, the Pendleton area has been fairly quiet as far as human-caused fire starts go, but the district has had eight fires this spring and, according to Matt Howard, ODF’s Wallowa Unit forester, his jurisdiction has had 16 fire calls since April 1.

Besides dry conditions, the Pendleton National Weather Service predicts high wind storms as being the new normal for the region as the climate continues to warm.

“If we’re looking ahead, temperatures are gradually warming, which gives the possibility for thermal gradients across the Cascades

to set up, creating greater westerly winds,” said Brandon Lawhorn, a meteorologist at Pendleton’s NWS office. “If they set up more often, we will see more of these high wind events or wind advisories, but how impactful they will be is in question. However, it doesn’t take much of a breeze and dry conditions to create that greater fire weather concern.”

The extended forecast for later in May, June and July across the Blue Mountains calls for above normal temperatures and below normal precipitation.

“In June and July, across the Columbia Basin and into Central Oregon, there is an above normal significant wildfire potential,” Lawhorn said.

Closer in, Lawhorn said, severe weather

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Oregon to get sixth U.S. Congressional House seat

By SARA CLINE
Associated Press/Report for America

PORTLAND — Steady population growth, driven by newcomers streaming in from other states, is giving Oregon greater national political clout.

U.S. Census Bureau figures released on Monday, April 26, show the state’s population increased by

10% over the past decade to more than 4.2 million, enough to give it an additional congressional district



Murdock

Southwell

for the first time in 40 years.

Expanding its U.S. House seats from five to six won’t necessarily be a win for Democrats, who control the state politically and hold all but one of the current seats.

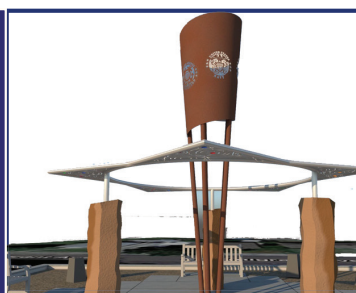
“The real quandary for Democrats is that Oregon is much more of a competitive state than you would think,” said Priscilla Southwell, a political science professor at the University of Oregon.

In last year’s presidential election, she said 42% of Oregon voters cast their ballot for a Republican House candidate. Democrats are concentrated in Portland, its suburbs and Eugene, home to the University of Oregon. Rural and Eastern Oregon is heavily Republican.

“I think (Democrats) are going to come under a lot of pressure,

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