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Forecast: Case levels to remain elevated throughout holidays

Oregon won't return to pre-spike COVID-19 levels until near year end

By GARY A. WARNER
Oregon Capital Bureau

SALEM — A recovery from the record-breaking spike in COVID-19 cases has been pushed from Halloween to Christmas, according to an

Oregon Health & Science University forecast released last week.

Longer hospital stays for those with severe infections from the delta variant and signs of public weariness with pandemic safeguards have delayed the expected pace of a rebound.

The premature dropping of mask-wearing and limits on socializing, along with a return to tepid rates of vaccination, could

slow the rebound further.

"We're in a moment right now where we're going to see what happens as fatigue sets in," said Peter Graven, Ph.D., lead data scientist on the OHSU forecast.

In mid-August, OHSU accurately predicted a sharply rising spike in cases from 200 hospitalizations per day in early July would top-out at nearly 1,200 by early September.

But the forecast that the numbers would drop at roughly the same rate as they rose proved overly optimistic.

The earlier forecast showed daily COVID-19 hospitalizations dipping below 200 by the end of October.

The data at the time showed the numbers falling under 100 by the time the holiday season kicked-off with Thanksgiving at the end of November.

In the forecast released Sept. 30, pre-spike hospitalization levels won't be reached until the last half of December. Case levels will remain elevated throughout the holiday season, with 600 hospitalizations per day forecast on Nov. 1.

Rates below 50 cases per day wouldn't be realized until mid-March 2022.

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NEW HEIGHTS AVIATION PROGRAM

Aviation program again ready to soar



Lexi Rindfleisch, left, the new aviation instructor at Joseph Charter School, discusses a Subaru engine in an experimental aircraft with aviation student Jett Peterson on Thursday, Sept. 23, 2021.

By BILL BRADSHAW
Wallowa County Chieftain

JOSEPH — Joseph Charter School's aviation program is about to take off again, after nearly being grounded. The school has hired Alexis "Lexi" Rindfleisch as the new instructor.

"They can call me Mrs. R.," she said. "It's easier."

The young woman from Riggins, Idaho, recently took over the 5-year-old aviation program, one of few such high school programs in the country.

"That's one of the things I found so exciting is that I get to teach kids and be involved in aviation," she said. "I didn't even know programs like this existed."

Neither she nor district Superintendent Lance Homan knew the number of high school aviation programs in the country, but they're certain there aren't many.

"It's growing in popularity," Homan said. "I've gotten emails from superintendents wanting to know about it."

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Joseph Charter School aviation instructor Lexi Rindfleisch retrieves a piece of artwork made in a metal fabricator in her classroom Tuesday, Sept. 28, 2021. The fabricator can be used to make airplane parts that are missing or damaged, she said.

New road plans signal readiness for housing development

City public works boss estimates area could hold up to 2,100 homes

By ANTONIO SIERRA
East Oregonian

PENDLETON — The city of Pendleton is finalizing a deal with several property owners that could lead to a new road between Highway 11 and Highway 30, potentially opening hundreds of space for thousands of new houses on the east side of South Hill.

At a Tuesday, Oct. 5, meeting, the council unanimously agreed to start the process of acquiring easements and a property that will allow the city to build a road and utilities at the site. In the city's plans, the road would extend Southeast Kirk Road eastward, eventually connecting it with Goad Road and Highway 30. The plans also call for a new road entrance off of Highway 11 between Kirk and Southeast Isaac Avenue, and extending Southeast 11th Street and Franklin Grade to meet the new road. In an interview after the meeting, Public Works Director Bob Patterson said the roads could be built in phases based on demand.

Going into the meeting, the council only was scheduled to approve the previous meeting's minutes and review some staff reports. But after quickly running through the agenda, the council recessed to meet privately in executive session. After 15 minutes, the council resumed the public session and unanimously voted to sign agreements with the Rees family, Goad Family LC and the Indian Hills Investment Co.

The three groups have all agreed to provide easements to the city to build the road, while Goad Family LC also is selling up to an acre east of Goad Road to the city for \$720 so the city can build a water booster station on the land. While the road can be built in phases, Patterson said the booster station and water lines need to be built for the project to work.

"Water is the primary issue," he said.

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Eden's Kitchen struggles to stay afloat

Former employee Kayla Henshaw now owns the business and is looking to build its brand

By BRYCE DOLE
East Oregonian

PENDLETON — Kayla Henshaw said she hasn't paid herself in three months.

When the 29-year-old lifelong Pendleton resident took the reins from the previous owner of Eden's Kitchen back in June, the small restaurant on Southwest Sixth Street lost virtually all of its employees. Tax

issues and supply shortages and prices only compounded the struggle to get her new business off the ground.

"It's been tough to keep up," said Henshaw, who has worked at Eden's Kitchen since 2015.

Though federal COVID-19 relief funds provided some help, three months later, she has started a GoFundMe campaign, hoping to raise \$5,000 and keep the business afloat. The account has raised just \$170.

Businesses throughout Pendleton have struggled amid the workforce shortage that has swept the nation during the pandemic. Eden's

Kitchen is no exception.

Henshaw works 10-hour shifts starting at 5:30 a.m., in between taking her 4-year-old son back and forth to school. Some days she logs extra hours to make dough and ensure the cinnamon rolls are ready. To keep labor costs down, she works as many hours as she can.

"I've sacrificed a lot of family time and free time to be here as much as possible," she said.

The restaurant makes between \$800 to \$1,000 per day, barely enough to break even.

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Ben Lonergan/East Oregonian
Kayla Henshaw, owner of Eden's Kitchen in Pendleton, prepares ingredients for a chicken salad Wednesday, Oct. 6, 2021, at the Pendleton sandwich shop. Henshaw, who was an employee at the establishment, took over ownership of the business in June and has not paid herself in three months.