



INSIDE

CHECK OUT PUMPKIN PATCHES AND THE ECHO CORN MAZE

COMMUNITY SPIRIT

Picking pumpkins benefits struggling infant girl



Ben Lonergan/East Oregonian

Mikayla and Kyle Rakestraw and their children Parker and Blakely pose for a portrait Saturday, Oct. 9, 2021, at the Hendricks Boys' Pumpkin Patch in Milton-Freewater.

By **BRYCE DOLE**
East Oregonian

MILTON-FREEWATER — A family in Milton-Freewater is holding a pumpkin patch fundraiser for multiple weeks to support a struggling infant girl.

Parker Rakestraw, a little more than a year old, has suffered from brain damage since birth. She is the daughter of Mikayla and Kyle Rakestraw.

Mikayla Rakestraw, a hair stylist from Milton-Freewater, received an emergency flight to Sacred Heart Children's Hospital in Spokane last May when her water broke at 26 weeks.

"I was kind of in shock," Rakestraw said. "I didn't pack a bag. I didn't know what to expect. I should have known I was having a baby, but I didn't think it was happening."

Doctors placed Rakestraw on bed rest for 12 days while they monitored her unborn daughter. Then, she went into labor, but doctors told her she had an infection. At around 1 a.m., they decided she would need an emergency cesarean section. Her husband still was at home.

"It was definitely scary," she said. "And he was definitely disappointed that he wouldn't make it."

Parker was born at just 2 pounds, 8 ounces and a tic more than 14 inches in length. The hospital placed her into its neonatal intensive care unit, where for 18 hours she had to breathe with a ventilator. After nine days, doctors conducted a routine brain ultrasound and found her brain was bleeding.

A few days later, the bleeding had worsened and her head had grown. Doctors determined she had developed hydrocephalus, and the blood pressure touching her brain had killed portions of her brain matter. She



Ben Lonergan/East Oregonian

A sign at the Hendricks Boys' Pumpkin Patch advertises "pumpkins for sale" Saturday, Oct. 9, 2021, in Milton-Freewater.

learned how to drink from a bottle while in the NICU.

Now, Rakestraw said, little Parker still doesn't know how to take a bottle.

Parker has undergone two procedures, one for the brain bleed and another to place a permanent shunt in her brain that drains fluid. The family goes to regular doctors visits to ensure Parker's shunt is working well and she is stable.

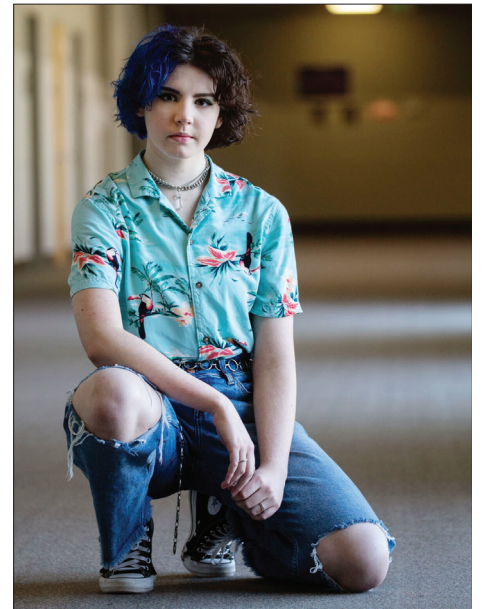
"It was scary," she said. "I always thought I would have a normal delivery, like my first. So this was definitely scary — the unknown."

Kelsey Hendricks, a bookkeeper

in Milton-Freewater, heard about the Rakestraw's situation and knew she wanted to help out. A year before, her family held a pumpkin patch fundraiser for a young boy with cancer, helping the family pay for expenses such as medical bills and fuel. They even helped purchase iPads for the family's sons so they could chat while the young boy was undergoing chemotherapy.

So she decided to do the same thing for the Rakestraws.

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Kathy Aney/East Oregonian

Laylah Lucas, junior at Hermiston High School and mental health advocate, poses for a portrait Monday, Oct. 11, 2021. She struggles with depression and anxiety, which she attributes in part to experiences on social media.

Equally good and equally horrible

Social media troubles teens, increases anxiety, depression

By **BRYCE DOLE**
and **ERICK PETERSON**
East Oregonian

UMATILLA COUNTY — For Laylah Lucas, it all started with YouTube.

At 9 years old, she watched toy reviews on the popular video platform. Then she turned to Pinterest to view other artists' work. Then, in eighth grade, she got a cell-phone and felt more independent. So, she started her Instagram account, seeking connection with other teens.

She started spending more and more time on social media. She turned to TikTok, where she fell down rabbit holes, watching video after video. She was hooked.

Over time, her mental health suffered.

The Instagram influencers, their perfect lives and bodies, made her feel insecure about her own life and body. She watched videos from her friends and felt she always was missing out. She said she's bisexual, so when threats against the LGBTQ community spread across social media during Pride month in June, she was terrified.

"That's scary, because you don't know if that's true or a rumor," said Lucas, a 16-year-old Hermiston High School junior who struggles with depression and anxiety. "And that rumor spread like the plague. And that's a lot of mental bog. Because now you're afraid. Especially if you're like me."

Lucas realized what has long been understood but has reached the national spotlight again in recent weeks: Social media plays a major role in the declining mental health of teens.

"I feel like if you're a teen and you say that you haven't then you're lying," Lucas said. "It's impossible to not be intimidated or insulted or made to feel bad about yourself because of social media."

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Change in 2020 leaves Oregon hospitals without guidelines for crisis management

By **ALEX WITTWER**
EO Media Group

LA GRANDE — Oregon for years held a standardized triage principle in its repertoire for a public health crisis — such as a major earthquake or pandemic. But in September 2020, the state left Oregon hospitals without concrete guidelines for crisis management and away with its crisis care guidelines.

That was right before Oregonians began to experience the highest surge of COVID-19 cases, deaths and hospitalizations, at least up until recently. The Oregon Health Authority has not yet given new guidance in the form of a "Standard Crisis of Care" docu-

ment, such as those in Idaho or Alaska. Instead, the OHA asked hospitals to make their own plans for rationing care in the event they become overrun by critical-condition COVID-19 patients.

While cases have been declining statewide in the past weeks, infections in Eastern Oregon Region 9 — from Morrow County to Malheur County — have remained steady.

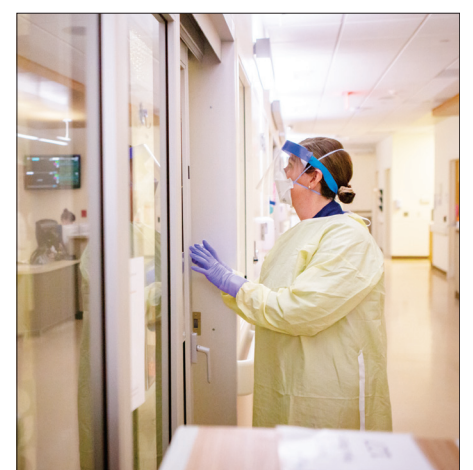
On Sept. 5, the weekly case rate per 100,000 residents in Eastern Oregon Region 9 was 524. On Sept. 25, three weeks later, that case rate fell slightly to 522 per 100,000, according to Oregon Health Authority numbers. Statewide, that same weekly case rate number was just 244 cases per 100,000 residents using the

same OHA data on Sept. 25.

In comparison, the statewide infection rates for Idaho and Alaska — two states that have implemented emergency crisis standard of care protocols for hospitals — were 464 and 672 cases per 100,000 residents, respectively, for the same weekly period, according to data from those states.

Still, the Oregon Health Authority rescinded its 66-page, long-standing "Crisis Care Guidance" document and published in its place a set of priorities and ethical considerations, leaving the question of how to build a fair and just crisis standard of care to individual hospitals.

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Ben Lonergan/East Oregonian, File

Judith Lindsey enters the room of a COVID-19 patient in the critical care unit on Aug. 19, 2021, while working a night shift at CHI St. Anthony Hospital in Pendleton. While COVID-19 cases have declined statewide in recent weeks, hospitals in much of Eastern Oregon during September saw a steady number of cases.