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The shelter dog Throwback plays with Rowan Winterton at the Loves Pets adoption event Saturday, Oct. 16, 2021, at the Pet Rescue Humane Society of Eastern Oregon, Hermiston. The event resulted in the adoption of 17 dogs and 10 cats.

Vaccine mandate goes into effect

Almost 90% of staff at CHI St. Anthony have received the jab; Good Shepherd says it's complying with rules

By **BRYCE DOLE** and **ANTONIO SIERRA**
East Oregonian

UMATILLA COUNTY — More than 2 out of every 5 workers in Umatilla and Morrow counties are subject to the state's vaccine mandate.

For many of them, the clock struck midnight on Monday, Oct. 18.

Large regional employers such as CHI St. Anthony Hospital, the Pendleton School District and the Hermiston School District reported high vaccination rates among their staff, with most unvaccinated staff granted a medical or religious exemption to stay on or with their employer.

For state workers at one of the region's largest employers, the Oregon Department of Corrections, the hard deadline to get the shot was pushed out to the end of November.

Both prisons in the county reported more than 89% of their security officers, ranked from correctional officers through captains, are vaccinated against COVID-19. That means 60 of the 615 officers between the two prisons are facing joblessness, according to a spokesperson with the Oregon Department of Corrections.

County-wide data

Roughly 13,000 of the 30,300 jobs that comprise Umatilla County's workforce are under the vaccine mandate, according to Dallas Fridley, a regional economist for the Oregon Employment Department.

And in Morrow County, roughly 2,700 out of the 5,900 workers there are mandated, or nearly 46%, Fridley said.

Many of those jobs are in large firms, including the Amazon data center in Boardman or the many Walmart facilities around Umatilla County, Fridley said.

Statewide, roughly 57% of all jobs fall under the mandate, Fridley said, or less than 3 out of every 5 employees.

In an effort to curb the spread of COVID-19, Gov. Kate Brown announced the mandate in August as the delta variant rocked the state's health care system and inundated hospitals across Eastern Oregon with unvaccinated patients.

Since May, more than 90% of patients hospitalized with COVID-19 in Umatilla County have been unvaccinated, according to data from Umatilla County Public Health. In that same time frame, 52 county residents who contracted the virus have died.

See Mandate, Page A9

HOT DOGS!



Locals line up to adopt new pets in Hermiston

By **ERICK PETERSON**
East Oregonian

HERMISTON — Shannon White and her 11-year-old step-daughter, Ennelly Escobedo, were the first people in line Saturday morning, Oct. 15, to adopt a pet at Hermiston's Pet Rescue Humane Society of Eastern Oregon.

Pet Rescue and Harley Swain Subaru teamed up for the Loves Pets adoption event, which began at 11 a.m., but the mother-daughter duo said they were waiting since before 10 for the doors to open.

Within minutes of entering the shelter at 1844 N.W. Geer Road, Hermiston, they walked out with a new family member — a dog named Brownie. This new pet, a pit bull, would join a family that already included a bird and a chihuahua.

Ennelly said she was excited about Brownie, and she knew the most important things to do to take care of a dog.

"You have to give them food, water, a bed, and shelter," she said. "You have to potty-train."

More than 30 people in all stood in line before the start time, all hoping to add a new dog or cat to their families.

Pet Rescue on its Facebook page on Oct. 16 announced there were 17 dog and 10 cat adoptions by the time the event ended at 3 p.m.

Four dogs, however, were left "looking for their forever families," but the "shelter was emptied on cats," according to the post.

Harley Swain Subaru paid all adoption fees, the



Erick Peterson/East Oregonian

Katherine Lopez holds Shatner, a dog she intended to adopt Saturday, Oct. 16, 2021, at the Loves Pets adoption event in Hermiston.

Hermiston pet supply store Petsense distributed coupon books. Pet Rescue on its Facebook page stated the adoption day "went great."

Angela Bradshaw of Hermiston came to the shelter with her two daughters and four grandchildren.

See Pets, Page A9



State forecast suggests COVID-19 spike should end by Christmas

Hospitalizations for COVID-19 continue a steady decline in Oregon, but local ICU beds almost full

By **GARY A. WARNER**
Oregon Capital Bureau

SALEM — A deadly spike in COVID-19 infections that began just before Independence Day should near its end around Christmas, a new state forecast said Thursday, Oct. 14.

But with more than two months to go to reach the projected end point, about 177,000 more infections are

expected in the state, according to the Oregon Health & Science University weekly forecast.

The Oregon Health Authority reported hospitalizations for COVID-19 continue a steady decline in Oregon, with 563 infected patients hospitalized on Oct. 15, less than half the 1,178 recorded Sept. 1.

But hospitalization remains high in OHA Region 9, which encompasses the counties of Morrow, Umatilla, Union, Baker, Walla, and Malheur. According to the Oregon Health Authority, 22 of the region's 26 staffed beds in intensive care units had patients as of Oct. 15.

The statewide spike in infections, which began in the first week of July and peaked just after Labor Day, has steadily tracked downward since, the report said. The spike was driven by the highly contagious delta variant.

However, the forecast projects the state still has two-and-half months until it might reach "herd immunity" for the delta variant. OHSU reported that is when 85% of the population is either vaccinated or has been exposed to the virus.

The university's virus modeling projects that Oregon will arrive at that point around Dec. 26.

Over that time, the fore-

cast estimates there will be another 177,000 infections in Oregon — enough to fill Autzen Stadium at the University of Oregon three times.

The number of breakthrough cases of infections in people who have been vaccinated has risen, accounting for 27.2% of new infections in OHA's weekly report released Oct. 13. It's one of the reasons federal and state health officials have moved to approve booster shots of vaccine for those already inoculated.

But throughout the spike, severe cases requiring hospitalization and deaths have remained low among vacci-

nated people compared to those who are unvaccinated.

Vaccinated patients account for less than 5% of hospitalizations and less than 1% of deaths.

"There's still time for people to take action to prevent transmissions and to get vaccinated, but we're projecting that a whole bunch more people are going to get infected in the next month," said Peter Graven, director of the OHSU Office of Advanced Analytics.

Oregon recorded 610 deaths in September, the highest monthly total since the pandemic arrived in the state in late February 2020.

See Spike, Page A9



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