

Pets:

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"This is a surprise for me," Bradshaw said.

Her family told her of the event, and they brought her along to help pick out a new dog. She was happy to be there, she said, because she had adopted a dog at other shelters. It worked out well for her, and she was hopeful for another loving fur-baby.

She said she sees her role with the new dog as similar to any grandparent's position with a new baby. That is, she will enjoy the dog, but the parents will have to do the hard work.

The "parents" would include the second generation of Bradshaw/Winterton family, who were looking to pick up a dog to fill a hole in their hearts. A pair of their other dogs recently died, both of old age. They were especially happy to get a dog that was a rescue dog, a canine obtained from a shelter.

"We're going to give a dog a second chance, and they make us happy," Katie Bradshaw said. She is the sister of Callie Winterton, who brought her children.

One of those children, Shay Winterton, said she was happy to get a dog, but she really wanted a cat, or even a horse.

"Do they have horses here?" she asked her mother.

When she learned she could not get a horse or a cat, she asked if she could get two dogs.

Her mother said she might have to think about two dogs, though she added they have plenty of room for additional pets. The family lives on 5 acres, and they consider themselves a "dog family."

She said she might even add a horse sometime in the near future.



Angela Bradshaw of Hermiston and her granddaughter Rowan Winterton check out Throwback, along with Winterton's aunt, Katie Bradshaw, on Saturday, Oct. 16, 2021, at the Loves Pets adoption event in Hermiston.

Dog owner Veronica Lopez brought her daughter, Katherine Lopez, to adopt a pet that would take the place of their small dog, which died after a car ran it over. This was upsetting to the entire family, they said.

By the time they left the shelter, however, they were all smiles. They brought home Shatner, a new small dog that would join a larger dog waiting at home.

Katherine said she would soon give Shatner a tour of his home, plus teach him new tricks.

"This is a happy day," she said.

The day also was happy for Donna Lutz, even though one dog, Ogano, urinated on her. Actually, Lutz decided to adopt the dog, a husky, because it urinated on her. She took it as a sign.

"I love huskies," she said. "They're special."

As she was leaving the event, she was giggling, beaming with joy over her new pet.

The value of pet adoption

Jackie Alleman, once owned the shelter, which her mother built. Now a volunteer, Alleman said it was "super important" to hold adoption events.

"We have so many dogs who are abandoned," she stressed. "The best way to take care of them is with shelters until they can find regular homes."

Beau Putnam, shelter director and Alleman's son-in-law, said this work means a lot to him. He said he figures the shelter has given homes to thousands of animals. Dogs and

cats are the most common, he said, but they sometimes find homes for others, such as a peacock and bunnies.

The shelter obtains its animals from local city governments, which pick up strays. Also, some people bring their own animals to the shelter, giving them up when they cannot care for them.

Even outside of adoption days, Putnam said, the shelter is open to guests Tuesday through Saturday, 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. Adoption fees are \$125 and up for dogs, \$30 for cats. A driver's license is required.

Putnam pointed out the on-site thrift store is open during shelter hours. Profits benefit the shelter. The store also accepts donations of used goods.

Spike:

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OHSU said the drop is being aided by an increase in vaccinations, including those motivated by the deadlines for state and federal employee mandates.

The state's "immunity index" shows that 22% of Oregonians remain vulnerable to the virus, having neither been vaccinated or exposed to the virus by others.

"A lot of people have gotten infected over the past three months, and it's become harder for the virus to find susceptible people," Graven said.

And while there remains a large pool of unvaccinated Oregonians who could end up in the hospital, Graven said the worst likely is over.

"The severe strain on hospitals should ease as the virus finds an ever-shrinking pool of susceptible hosts," Graven said. "It's going to be increasingly difficult to generate a new surge in hospitalizations."

Patients with COVID-19 accounted for 24% of all cases in intensive care units statewide as of Oct. 12. At the peak of the spike, they took up more than 50% of ICU capacity.

The OHSU report said the timeline could be slowed by the trend of Oregonians tiring of preventative measures such as wearing masks and avoiding gathering indoors with those outside of their household or outside in large groups.

While a high number of deaths have been reported recently, deaths are the last indicator to rise or fall in a spike. The current numbers are projected to decrease, as hospitalizations and infections already have gone down.

Test positivity continues to slowly decline. OHA reported the statewide rate at 7.3% on Oct 15. OHA officials say a rate below 5% is when the number of new infections is within manageable limits.

Mandate:

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Hospitals

Emily Smith, a spokesperson for CHI St. Anthony in Pendleton, said in an email that 88% of the hospitals' staff are vaccinated. She said approximately 60% of employees who requested an exemption got one, and some requests are pending.

Those who are not vaccinated and who have not received an exemption "will be placed on unpaid administrative leave for 90 days, during which time they can reconsider vaccination," Smith said. Unvaccinated employees who get the shot later "will be eligible for rehire at a later date," Smith added.

Smith said in an email the mandate prompted an 18% increase in the hospital's vaccination rate. She added the hospital is "adjusting staff so that operations will be minimally impacted."

The East Oregonian sought that information from Good Shepherd Medical Center, Hermiston.

Caitlin Cozad, a spokesperson for Good Shepherd, said in response to questions, "Good Shepherd is compliant with the state mandate and fully operational."

The Oregon Health Authority has not updated its public dashboard showing vaccine uptake among health care workers in individual counties since Oct. 4. But the two-week-old data shows that roughly 30% of all health care workers in Umatilla County, and 24% of health care workers in Morrow County, were unvaccinated at that time.

In all, 18% of Oregon's health care workers are unvaccinated, according to state data.

More than 1.1 million Oregonians work in jobs that are under the mandate, or 3 out of every 5 working residents, Oregon Public Broadcasting reported.

The website guidestar.org specializes in collecting public information about nonprofits. A 2020 tax return available through the website shows St. Anthony had 412 employees in 2019. Tax returns

filed in May 2021 shows Good Shepherd has 887 employees.

The Morrow County Health District, which includes Pioneer Memorial Hospital in Heppner, did not respond to a list of questions prior to press time. An official in the county's human resources department on Oct. 18 was unable to provide data before deadline on how many workers the health district employs.

Schools

In public education, Eastern Oregon's two largest school districts won't face any labor shortages as a result of the vaccine mandate and have already filled the vacancies it created.

In Hermiston, Superintendent Tricia Mooney reported 85% of district staff were vaccinated as of Oct. 15. Another 14.5% had secured a medical or religious exemption while three Hermiston staff, or 0.5%, left the district as a result. Mooney said the district is filling those positions with a combination of substitutes and temporary hires. Pendleton Superintendent Chris

Fritsch said his district's vaccination status hadn't changed too much since he shared a preliminary report with the Pendleton School Board earlier this month. About 90% of Pendleton's staff is vaccinated, with most of the rest obtaining exemptions to stay employed while remaining unvaccinated.

Fritsch on Oct. 18 said one staff member resigned as a result of the mandate, and the district placed another on unpaid leave. He added that a third employee resigned several weeks ago perhaps because of the mandate, but he couldn't confirm it.

According to Fritsch, no employees were terminated for noncompliance with the mandate. Fritsch said the district already has filled all of its vacancies with permanent hires. "We're pretty happy with the quality of candidates," he said.

Prisons

Two of the largest employers in Umatilla County are its state prisons.

Eastern Oregon Correctional Institution, Pendleton, employs

425 prison staff, according to Lindsey McKnight, the facility's human resources manager. The Oregon Department of Corrections reported Two Rivers Correctional Institution, Umatilla, has 468 employees.

Both prisons reported high vaccination rates among their staffs. TRCI reported 35 of its 325 security officers have not notified the state they have gotten vaccinated. At EOIC, 25 out of its 290 officers have reported having gotten the shot, according to Jennifer Black, communications manager for the corrections.

Black said unvaccinated staff who inform the prison during the work day on Oct. 18 that they have begun the vaccination process "will have a grace period until Nov. 30th to become fully vaccinated." This only applies to AFSCME Security and Security Plus employees, Black said in an email to the newsroom.

"Now, the majority of Department of Corrections employees have more time to comply with the governor's vaccine mandate," she said.

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News Photo - "Embracing Disaster" by Ben Lonergan

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Photo Essay - "Banjo Man" by Ben Lonergan

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Collage of newspaper front pages from the East Oregonian, including headlines like 'Protest draws a crowd', 'Oregon has a glimmer of hope on COVID trends', and 'Small size belies big COVID-19 problem'.