

INSIDE

MUSIC RETURNS TO THE STAGE AT EOU



Amanda Waterland with St. Anthony Hospital, Pendleton, hands out winter gear Wednesday, Nov. 3, 2021, to people at the Salvation Army in Pendleton.

Ben Lonergan/East Oregonian

Local vaccine providers strained after Bi-Mart closes pharmacies

By ANTONIO SIERRA
East Oregonian

UMATILLA COUNTY — Bi-Mart closing its pharmacies is affecting more than just local prescriptions.

According to officials from Umatilla County Public Health, the outflow of patients from Bi-Mart to other local pharmacies has hurt their ability to administer one of their key services during the pandemic: the COVID-19 vaccine.

Public Health Director Joe Fiumara said Bi-Mart pharmacies weren't just reliable vaccinators, but also good partners that would work the department to offer off-site vaccination clinics. When Bi-Mart decided to shutter all of its pharmacies in the area, the chain put pressure on other local pharmacies just as the state is rolling out booster shots for adults and vaccines for children as young as 5.

Fiumara said he heard reports Safeway temporarily stopped offering vaccines in Pendleton as it dealt with an influx of new patients from Bi-Mart. He added it seems like the store has since resumed vaccine surfaces.

Yellowhawk to hold vaccination drive next week for 5-12 year olds

See Strain, Page A8

FIGHTING THE CHILL

St. Anthony offers up cold weather supplies

By BEN LONERGAN
East Oregonian

PENDLETON — Hats, tents, sleeping bags and other outerwear lined a table Wednesday, Nov. 3, at the Salvation Army in Pendleton as the St. Anthony Hospital Community Health Outreach program distributed winter gear and flu shots to the lunch hour crowd.

“We want to help out with preventative care — like flu shots,” Amanda Waterland said.

Waterland, a community health worker for St. Anthony Hospital, and Jennifer Peterson, a registered nurse, staffed Wednesday's event handing out outerwear, hygiene supplies, tents and sleeping bags. The event, which was the final of the year, served as a last chance to distribute warm gear ahead of the cold season.

Since the spring, the hospital outreach program has spent the last Thursday of

each month offering COVID-19 shots, flu shots, medical education and other items to those attending the Salvation Army's free lunch program.

Peterson said this week's event came after high interest at last week's event caused them to run out of sleeping bags and tents. They distributed roughly 30 sleeping bags and tents last week and wanted an additional opportunity to distribute more supplies before ending the service for the year.

See Supplies, Page A8

Ben Lonergan/East Oregonian

Jennifer Peterson, left, and Amanda Waterland staff a mobile outreach clinic Wednesday, Nov. 3, 2021, that St. Anthony Hospital runs at the Salvation Army in Pendleton.



Committee sends Sams nomination to full U.S. Senate

By ANTONIO SIERRA
East Oregonian

WASHINGTON — Chuck Sams is entering the final stages of the confirmation process with strong momentum.

On Tuesday, Nov. 2, the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources unanimously voted to approve Sams' nomination to the National Park Service on a voice vote. Given that senators from both parties voiced support for Sams and no one on the committee voted against sending his nomination to the full Senate, the committee vote bodes well for Sams, a member of the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation.

As Sams' home state senator, Ron Wyden, Democrat, continued to encourage his colleagues to support the former tribal administrator and nonprofit executive.

“This is an American who we're going to be proud of in terms of (his) service (to) parks,” he said.



Sams

See Sams, Page A8

Booster shots spur COVID-19 vaccine uptick

Umatilla County reported 2,000-plus COVID-19 immunizations last week — most were boosters

By BRYCE DOLE
East Oregonian

PENDLETON — Umatilla County's reported COVID-19 vaccinations more than tripled last week now that residents can receive booster shots, according to data from the county health department.

A series of well-attended clinics over the weekend spurred the sky-high immunization numbers. In all, more than 2,000 people received shots last week, said Joe Fiumara, the county's public health director.

“This did exceed expectations,” he said.

The health department held clinics Friday, Oct. 29, and Saturday, Oct. 30, in Pendleton and Milton-Freewater. The Pendleton clinics saw 452 people receive boosters on the first day and 359 the second. But only 10 people received first or second doses on Oct. 29. (The health department did not yet have data for Oct. 30.)

The Milton-Freewater clinics saw 152 people vaccinated on Oct. 29 and 127 people on Oct. 30. The health department did not yet have data showing how many people received boosters, but Fiumara said he expected trends to be similar to Pendleton's clinic.

“We knew there was going to be some demand, but it won't have an

impact on the pandemic,” Fiumara said.

The week of Oct. 17, the county reported just 626 immunizations total.

Before last week, health officials had estimated they would deliver just 200 booster doses daily. Seeing the high demand for boosters “felt like February,” Fiumara said, when vaccine eligibility had expanded and the county at times didn't have enough doses to go around.

But Fiumara noted it will be more important for unvaccinated people to receive their first doses than for hundreds of people to receive boosters. That's because the virus spreads predominantly among the unvaccinated, he said.

See Shots, Page A8

UMATILLA COUNTY'S COVID-19 STATS AS OF TUESDAY, NOV. 2

- The disease claimed two more lives, increasing the county's death toll to 155.
- COVID-19 has led to the deaths of nearly 30 county residents since the beginning of September.
- Cases in the county are declining. The county last week reported 182 cases. During the week ending Oct. 1, the county reported 510 cases.
- The county's total number of cases stands at 14,727.