

The show goes on at Enterprise's OK Theatre

By **BILL BRADSHAW**
Wallowa County Chieftain

ENTERPRISE — The show must go on.

That's Darrell Brann's intention and his plan is to reopen Enterprise's historic OK Theatre next spring.

Right now, the building's façade is covered with scaffolding in anticipation of its restoration this week.

"I've had people ask, 'Are you tearing it down?' Well, we're tearing it back to the good stuff and then rebuilding from there," Brann said.

Inside, much of the theater has been gutted in preparation for other work, such as retail spaces, a bar, remodeling the foyer and a green room — the place where performers prepare before coming on stage.

"Ours was yellow," Brann said of the old green room.

He said there also are plans to replace some sagging ceiling joists and he hopes to even add a kitchen.

Grants, donations helped

Brann said both grants and donations have helped fund the work.

"We were awarded a grant from the State Historic Preservation Office of \$85,000. I haven't done any fundraising," he said. "We were super



Bill Bradshaw/Wallowa County Chieftain

The façade of the OK Theatre in Enterprise is undergoing a major refurbishment as part of work to restore the theater and prepare it to reopen next spring, said co-owner Darrell Brann on Friday, Nov. 19, 2021.

happy to have it, but it doesn't take you as far as you'd like. A lot of theater owners, they're spending millions. With all the help we've had from the community, as far as labor, it's been an amazing thing. But we long for the day when we can be open and full and people can have a good time in here like they used to."

Already, through grants and donations, the heating system has been upgraded, as has the electrical wiring.

More decorative items also have been added, such as two opera boxes and the proscenium — the arch that creates a "window" around the scenery and performers.

Brann said he also received help from Restore Oregon, which has a mission to preserve, reuse and pass forward historic places.

The theater was originally built in 1918. In those days, it was where you'd go to see a silent film with Buster Keaton

or Charlie Chaplin or maybe Douglas Fairbanks and Mary Pickford. Unlike some in the late 1920s, the theater was equipped to accommodate the new "talkies" and kept showing films until 2013, when everything went digital.

"One of the main reasons the previous owners were getting out of it was that 2013 was the last year you could get reel film, and all the theater had was 32 mm. That equipment was fast becoming obso-

INTERESTED IN DONATING?

Who: Darrell and Christin Brann
What: Send check to OK Theatre
Where: 306 S.E. Second St., Enterprise, OR 97828
Email: oktheater1@gmail.com

oldest, Meredith, who just turned 20, already has recorded two albums. The most recent was recorded at the OK and released just a couple weeks ago.

Like today, when the OK first opened, the world was then in the midst of a deadly pandemic — the 1918 influenza pandemic — and was not allowed to open until early 1919.

The OK was forced to shut down again in March 2020, when the coronavirus struck. But that didn't stop Brann.

"Given our situation here, we've always had to sell every seat to make it work," he said. "We decided to take advantage of the forced down time to start remodeling."

In the meantime, he's gotten back to booking shows for the coming year.

"It will be open, but whether or not we get enough funds to really finish the bar" and other elements, he's still not sure.

"People should look forward to potential shows ... I don't want to do it in the thick of construction, but maybe by early spring we'll have a show. We'll see what we can pull off," he said. "In our family, we're hoping to do something for the community in gratitude for all the help we've had on the theater, the work days."

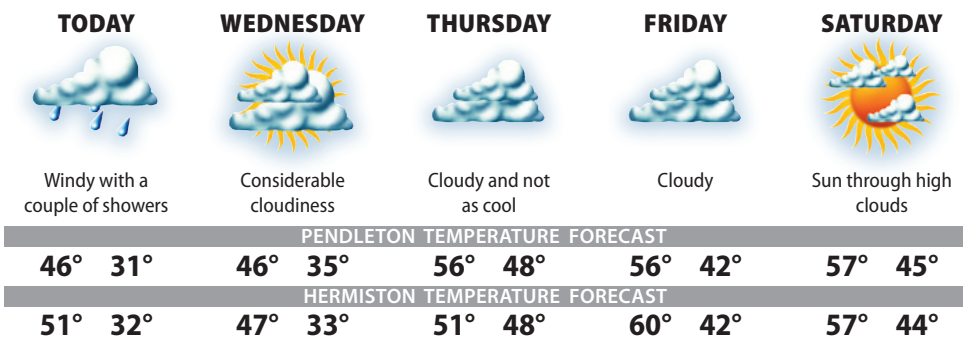
Musical family

"For me, it was a perfect step for the theater for us. ... We thought what could we do? So in 2011, was the first show I booked at the OK Theatre" before it was for sale, he said.

"I was just a local citizen, I have a construction company, I play music and grew up with music, I play a lot of gigs around here locally. ... I play guitar — blues, rock and folk. My wife (Christin) and I will do duos, country and folk. She's a singer and a pianist, but she always sang harmony with me primarily. We do a lot of weddings and things like that and our kids all got into it."

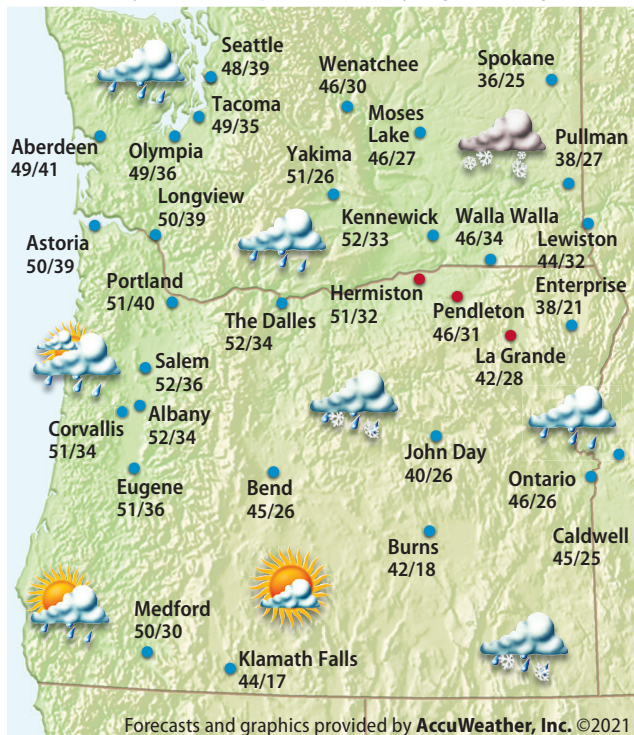
Of their five kids, the

Forecast for Pendleton Area



OREGON FORECAST

Shown is today's weather. Temperatures are today's highs and tonight's lows.



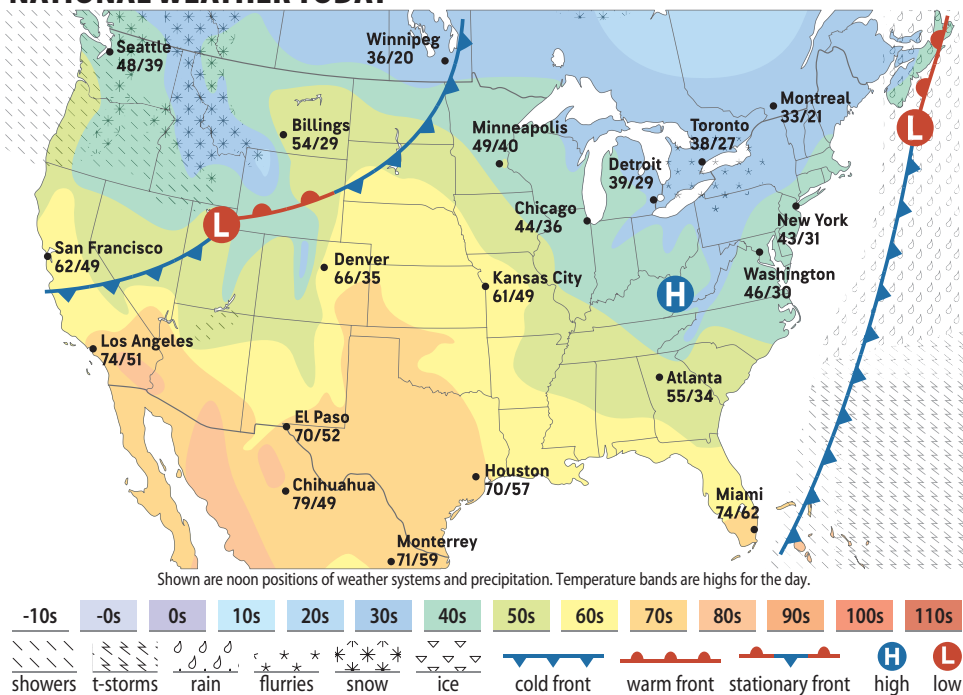
ALMANAC

PENDLETON through 3 p.m. yest.			
TEMP.	HIGH	LOW	
Yesterday	34°	29°	
Normals	47°	31°	
Records	71° (1933)	-5° (1985)	
PRECIPITATION	24 hours ending 3 p.m.		
Month to date	1.17"		
Normal month to date	1.02"		
Year to date	7.20"		
Last year to date	12.13"		
Normal year to date	11.34"		
HERMISTON through 3 p.m. yest.			
TEMP.	HIGH	LOW	
Yesterday	35°	33°	
Normals	48°	31°	
Records	73° (1974)	6° (2013)	
PRECIPITATION	24 hours ending 3 p.m.		
Month to date	1.08"		
Normal month to date	0.79"		
Year to date	5.00"		
Last year to date	3.90"		
Normal year to date	7.26"		
WINDS (in mph)	Today	Wed.	
Boardman	WSW 12-25	SW 3-6	
Pendleton	WSW 12-25	S 6-12	
SUN AND MOON			
Sunrise today	7:06 a.m.		
Sunset tonight	4:17 p.m.		
Moonrise today	7:31 p.m.		
Moonset today	11:09 a.m.		
Last	New	First	Full
Nov 27	Dec 3	Dec 10	Dec 18

NATIONAL EXTREMES

Yesterday's National Extremes: (for the 48 contiguous states)
High 90° in Fallbrook, Calif. Low 0° in Bodie State Park, Calif.

NATIONAL WEATHER TODAY



State offers help to pharmacies

Employee program not open to local pharmacies

By **JAYSON JACOBY**
Baker City Herald

SALEM — The Oregon Health Authority is offering to pay pharmacies \$35 for each dose of COVID-19 vaccine they give, a move that could help pharmacies hire employees to deal with the growing workload that resulted in long lines in Pendleton and across the state.

The program, which launched this month, also is intended to boost vaccination rates and ensure vaccines are available to all residents, said Rudy Owens, a public affairs specialist for the Oregon Health Authority.

To qualify for the payments, pharmacies must meet certain standards for "vaccine equity," including such things as offering multilingual signing for COVID-19 vaccinations, "expanded vaccine-related counseling aimed at boosting vaccine confidence," and "a plan for ongoing evaluation and continuous improvement to ensure equitable access," according to a flyer from OHA.

The agency's other program more directly addresses the staffing shortages that have plagued pharmacies, as the state will pay temporary pharmacists to bolster workforces.

However, Owens said the temporary staffing program is available only to independent pharmacies. Corporate-owned pharmacies, including the three in Baker City — at the Safeway, Albertsons and Rite Aid stores — are not eligible for the program, Owens said.

The larger chain pharmacies are eligible for the

vaccine payments, however. Owens said OHA doesn't have data yet on how many pharmacies have applied for the supplemental payments.

He said the pharmacy staffing shortages have been exacerbated by the closure of more than 35 Bi-Mart pharmacies, including the one in Pendleton.

The bigger culprit in the pharmacy crisis is the limited reimbursements that pharmacies receive from what are known as pharmacy benefit managers, or PBMs, said Brian Mayo, executive director of the Oregon State Pharmacy Association. If those reimbursements were "fair," pharmacies would be able to hire more employees and lines would be shorter, Mayo said.

Pendleton residents recently reported waiting in pharmacy lines more than an hour-and-a-half. Some reported having to wait several days to receive crucial medication. Those delays are not acceptable, Mayo said.

"Many community pharmacies across Oregon are five to 14 days behind filling prescriptions because they can't keep up with the demand," he said. "When somebody needs a medication they can't wait two weeks. Patient safety is a huge issue at this point."

Mayo said the Oregon State Pharmacy Association has been warning for years that low reimbursements to pharmacies by PBMs are a problem.

"The harms we have warned of have now come true," he said.

The Pharmacy Association is urging elected officials to take immediate action on reforming the PBM system.

The organization also is asking Oregon to exempt prescription drugs from the state's Corporate Activities

Tax, which the Legislature approved in 2019 and which took effect Jan. 1, 2020.

The Pharmacy Association has some high-level backing in its effort to reform the PBM system.

U.S. Sen. Ron Wyden, D-Oregon, recently sent a letter to Chiquita Brooks-LaSure, administrator of the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, a federal agency, citing PBM reimbursements and the fees charged by PBMs and by Medicare Part D prescription plans as contributing to pharmacy closures.

"I am deeply concerned that the rise of these fees has contributed to the permanent closure of 2,200 pharmacies nationwide between December 2017 and December 2020," Wyden wrote in his letter to Brooks-LaSure.

Wyden is calling on the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services to review pharmacy closures in the U.S. over the past five years, including the nature and effect of PBM payment practices, and to use the agency's authority to regulate their fees.

Mayo said the current situation, with lines of customers snaking through some stores, is frustrating for pharmacy employees.

"The pharmacists, technicians and interns are working as fast as they can," Mayo said. "In many cases, they are being forced to continue working without required breaks and voluntarily working longer unrecorded hours so they can provide care to their customers. They want to help the patients. That's why they chose this profession, but it feels like things are getting out of control."

"We must improve working conditions in pharmacies for the sake of patient safety and pharmacy staff member well-being," Mayo said.

CORRECTIONS: The *East Oregonian* works hard to be accurate and sincerely regrets any errors. If you notice a mistake in the paper, please call 541-966-0818.

EAST OREGONIAN
— Founded Oct. 16, 1875 —
211 S.E. Byers Ave., Pendleton 541-276-2211
333 E. Main St., Hermiston 541-567-6211
Office hours: Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.
Closed major holidays
EastOregonian.com
In the App Store:
EO EO
East Oregonian (USPS 164-980) is published Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday, by the EO Media Group, 211 S.E. Byers Ave., Pendleton, OR 97801. Periodicals postage paid at Pendleton, OR. Postmaster: send address changes to East Oregonian, 211 S.E. Byers Ave., Pendleton, OR 97801.
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