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## EFFORTS BOOST VACCINES AMONG HISPANICS



Ben Lonergan/East Oregonian  
**Maria Ugarte, right, looks away Friday, Dec. 10, 2021, as she receives her second dose of the COVID-19 vaccine from Sergio Gonzalez, a licensed practical nurse, during a vaccination clinic in Hermiston.**

### Hermiston clinic addresses disparity in COVID-19 vaccination rates

By ERICK PETERSON  
*East Oregonian*

HERMISTON — Walking to the door of a recent pop-up COVID-19 vaccination clinic in Hermiston, Maria Ugarte admitted to feeling emotional about getting a shot.

“I’m scared,” the Umatilla resident said. “But I’m going to get done with it. I’m going to get the shot.”

#### Ugarte’s story

Initially afraid of how the vaccine would affect her disabled daughter, she and other family members did not get vaccinated. She said she thought her family would not need to be vaccinated, as long as they followed other guidelines. So, they were careful to wear masks, wash their hands and social distance wherever possible, Ugarte said.

And still, the infection reached their home, she said.

She said she got sick and was



Ben Lonergan/East Oregonian  
**Jose Garcia carries a vaccination clinic sign Friday, Dec. 10, 2021, while setting up for a free COVID-19 vaccination clinic at New Horizons drug and alcohol rehabilitation center in Hermiston.**

bedridden for 21 days. Also, her daughter came down with COVID-19, Ugarte said, and she had a bad experience at Good Shepherd Medical Center, Hermiston. The hospital was stretched thin at the time of her daughter’s arrival, she said. Ugarte described the hospital as lacking beds and equipment, as other patients were also being treated.

“I thought I had lost her,” she said. “Thank God she’s OK.”

After they recovered, family

members started getting vaccinations, she said. Ugarte got her first Pfizer shot in October. She said she wanted to wait until she was feeling well before getting the necessary second shot. It is only now, she said, that her “foggy brain,” fatigue and cough, symptoms of COVID-19, have passed.

“I just want to tell everybody that this thing is freaking real,” she said of COVID-19, “and they should be afraid because they can die of it.”

#### Setting up for the shot

New Horizons drug and alcohol rehabilitation center in Hermiston provided its space for the clinic. Center Director Jose Garcia greeted Ugarte and welcomed her to fill out paperwork and then get her shot.

This was Garcia’s fifth vaccination event at New Horizons, he said. He provided space for health care providers to vaccinate individuals. Meanwhile, he offered visitors air purifiers, hand sanitizer, masks and more. He passed out information about COVID-19 prevention in English and Spanish. He set out boxes of food, made available by Agape House in Hermiston.

#### County public health boss looks into the numbers

According to Joseph Fiumara, public health director for Umatilla County Public Health, around 34% of Hispanic people in the county are vaccinated against the coronavirus. In contrast, 43% of the county’s white population is vaccinated, he said. These numbers may not be precise, he said, because they are from a survey in which Hispanic people were overrepresented.

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Ben Lonergan/East Oregonian  
**The Pendleton Fire Department logo adorns the side of an aircraft fire engine Thursday, Dec. 9, 2021, at Pendleton Fire Station No. 3 at the Eastern Oregon Regional Airport in Pendleton.**

## Fire chief wants to staff airport fire station

By ANTONIO SIERRA  
*East Oregonian*

PENDLETON — Like the range it is designated to protect, Pendleton Fire Station No. 3 usually is unmanned.

The fire station at 4615 N.W. A St. by the Eastern Oregon Regional Airport has long been unstaffed, but Pendleton Fire Chief Jim Critchley is looking to change that with the support of airport administrators.

On any given day, seven on-call firefighters and paramedics are split between two Pendleton fire stations. Completed in 2019, Pendleton Fire Station No. 1, 1455 S.E. Court Ave., is the fire department’s headquarters and normally maintains five on-duty personnel. Pendleton Fire Station No. 2, 1200 Southgate, gives the department a presence south of the Union Pacific railroad and Interstate 84 and keeps two firefighters and paramedics on staff. Both facilities are bolstered by resident interns in addition to the career staff.

That leaves Fire Station No. 3 at the airport, which mostly acts as a place to house vehicles and equipment that could be picked up at the building should there be a fire in the area.

Critchley said the department was used to getting about 15 minutes of lead time on fires in the airport area, but some recent fires convinced him the airport fire station needed to be staffed. He referenced two field fires the department responded to during the summer. While the airport was never seriously under threat, Critchley said the situation could have been worse if the wind was blowing a different way.

One of the marketing appeals of the Pendleton UAS Range is its vast empty spaces. Besides the industrial park to the south of the airfield, wheat fields and dry brush mostly surround the airport. While that may be a desirable quality for drone companies looking for a safe, discreet place to test their technology, it also provides plenty of fuel for fire season.

“Fire is a threat to everyone in the West,” he said.

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## Protecting Funland

### Surveillance cameras, laser ‘glo-fence’ help protect Hermiston park

By ERICK PETERSON  
*East Oregonian*

HERMISTON — Funland Playground in Hermiston is getting more measures to keep vandals and trespassers at bay.

Brandon Artz, director of the Hermiston Parks and Recreation, said the park is a community gem and he wants to keep it from unnecessary damage, particularly in the wake of a recent social media storm about the park.

#### A warning of possible theft

The initial Facebook post was from a sharp-eyed community member who

noticed bolts were loose on a piece of equipment, the treasure chest. This citizen voiced concerns to parks and rec on Facebook. Artz said the public grew worried someone was preparing to steal the chest, then it disappeared from the park, which seemed to confirm some suspicions.

However, Artz said, the culprit was parks and rec. After recognizing the chest was loose, he said he had staff remove the chest until it could be properly reinstalled.

Even after Artz issued the explanation, Facebook commenters voiced distress about security at the park.

According to the director, though, there is plenty of security for the playground and more on the way.



Erick Peterson/East Oregonian  
**Brandon Artz, director of Hermiston Parks and Recreation, on Friday, Dec. 10, 2021, discusses damage to Funland Playground.**



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