

COVID-19 vaccine keeps rolling out

County goes more than a week since any new cases

By RONALD BOND
Wallowa County Chieftain

ENTERPRISE — Around a quarter of Wallowa County has received a vaccine against COVID-19 through Wallowa Memorial Hospital, according to the latest numbers from WMH Communications Director Brooke Pace.

And the speed with which vaccines are being doled out has allowed the county to get further down the waitlist.

“We have been able to move into Group 7, the essential workers and people under 45 (with underlying conditions),” Pace said.

At WMH’s most recent clinic on Tuesday, March 16, it gave out about 450 doses of the vaccine. Of that, 205 were first doses of the Moderna vaccines, 145 were second doses and 100 were the new one-dose Johnson & Johnson vaccine.

“Some of those people were in the age sequencing that had passed up to this date (on getting vaccinated),” Pace said of those getting the newest vaccine. “I would say half of the Johnson & Johnson are being given out to those currently eligible in Group 6 and 7.”

Those qualified in Group 6 include those between 45-64 years old with one or more health conditions that puts them at increased risk, according to guid-



Courtne McCauliffe/Contributed Photo
Ruthie Mann, infection control officer at Wallowa Memorial Hospital, prepares a syringe with the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine Tuesday, March 9, 2021. In the background is Stacey Karvoski, WMH quality director and nurse.

ance from Oregon Health Authority. It also includes migrant and seasonal farm workers, seafood and agricultural workers, those working in food processing, homeless, people in low-income senior housing, wildland firefighters,

those displaced by wildfires, and pregnant women age 16 and older.

Group 7 is frontline workers, multi-generational household members and anyone between 16-44 with one or more underlying condition.

“We have worked through Phase 1A, age sequencing, (and) Phase 1B Group 6,” Pace said.

As of Monday, March 15, Pace said there were fewer than 50 people on the Group 7 waitlist. That could be due to people in that range not wanting the vaccine, “or,” Pace said, “they don’t know they are eligible yet.”

Currently, 1,702 individuals have received at least one dose of the Moderna vaccine through WMH and 1,152 have had both shots. One hundred people have had the Johnson & Johnson vaccine.

Pace said there are not expected to be any new first doses arriving this week.

“Only doses we’ll be getting this week are second doses,” she said. “Our understanding is we won’t be getting primary doses this week. The week of the 22nd, we would not be hosting a first-dose clinic,” if that plays out, she said.

She also said she’s unsure of when the hospital will get more Johnson & Johnson vaccine.

Those who want to get on the WMH waitlist are encouraged to call 541-426-5437.

The county has gone more than a week without any new cases reported by the OHA, and through Monday, March 15, remains at 144 cases of COVID-19 and five deaths related to the disease.

“That has taken a really positive nose dive,” Pace said. “We had a few weeks with all the positives and now it’s gone back down.”

IN BRIEF

NEOEDD board to meet Thursday via Zoom

ENTERPRISE — The Northeast Oregon Economic Development District Board of Directors will hold a meeting at 1:30 p.m. on Thursday, March 18, via Zoom, according to a press release.

Items on the agenda include the election of officers, an audit report, a needs assessment discussion, the fiscal sponsorship policy and the conflict of interest policy.

For connection information, contact Lisa Dawson, executive director at lisadawson@neoedd.org or 541-426-3598.

Class on Nez Perce Tribe to return

JOSEPH — Back by popular demand, a Zoom class on the Nez Perce Tribe by Rich Wandschneider will return Saturday, March 27, put on by the Josephy Center for Arts and Culture, according to a press release.

The Nez Perce Story: An Introduction will be presented from 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

Wandschneider will discuss traditional Plateau Indian culture from precontact to today.

The Nez Perce Story class will cover:

- Traditional Plateau Indian culture and the impacts of white arrivals: disease, horses, fur trade, missionaries, settlers and miners. This will take us up to the War of 1877.

- Immediate events preceding the war — the Treaties of 1855, 1863, and President U.S. Grant’s proposed division of the Wallowa Country in 1873. Some, but not too much attention is given to the war itself; this is covered in numerous books and articles.

- The war’s aftermath, From Bear’s Paw to Indian Territory (Oklahoma), and from Indian Territory back to the Northwest — but not to Oregon. Where and how the Nez Perce people live today; three reservations, a National Historical Park and the Nez Perce Wallowa Homeland.

Cost of the class is \$25. To preregister, visit www.josephy.org.

To learn more, visit <https://preview.tinyurl.com/NezPerceStory>.

— Chieftain Staff

Oregon tourism receives grant

Observer staff

PORTLAND — The Oregon Tourism Commission, which does business as Travel Oregon, awarded \$913,000 to 34 projects across the state. More than \$125,000 went to five projects in Eastern Oregon.

The grants are for “the development, enhancement and stewardship of key visitor experiences that are COVID-19 appropriate,” according to the press release from Travel Oregon, “will aid in economic recovery, enhance local livability and provide access to a diversity of explorers through the Destination Ready program.”

Todd Davidson, CEO of Travel Oregon, stated in the release that the projects are crucial in ensuring visitors and Oregonians have access to safe and enjoyable experiences as the commission rebuilds Oregon’s tourism economy while navigating the pandemic.

“Communities across the state rely on tourism as an essential component of their economic fabric,” Davidson continued. “These communities need visitor-ready attractions and experiences that continue to prioritize public health measures, and Travel Oregon is excited to support these local initiatives that will play a significant role in the state’s economic recovery.”

In Eastern Oregon, the following are the amounts, recipients and purpose of the awards:

- \$21,711 to the Greater Hells Canyon Council to help with mapping and trail maintenance operations for The Blue Mountains Trail, a

566-mile thru-hiking experience through northeast Oregon.

- \$20,000 to the Eastern Oregon Visitors Association for land stewardship and maintenance efforts to prepare Eastern Oregon’s most visited public lands for the coming season, including the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest, the Owyhee Region, the Steens Mountain Wilderness and the Alvord Desert.

- \$24,500 to the Eastern Oregon Visitors Association for updates to six Eastern Oregon Farm Trail brochures with distribution, and creation of a new on-the-ground kiosk.

- \$25,000 to the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife to make infrastructure and accessibility improvements to establish Marr Pond as the only ADA

accessible fishing facility in Wallowa County.

- \$35,000 to the city of John Day to create a community “pit stop” with food truck stalls, improved parking and new public restrooms.

Originally announced as a \$250,000 opportunity, Travel Oregon received more than \$4 million in requests through 135 applications. In response to the high demand, the agency reviewed internal program dollars and reallocated resources to increase the award amount to \$913,000, which allowed funding for 34 projects. The agency’s Destination Development team will manage projects, which range from direct investments to more collaborative projects where staff will work closely with awardees through implementation.