

As COVID hits again, businesses plod along



By Bill Bradshaw

WALLOWA COUNTY — As the latest surge of coronavirus hits Wallowa County, few businesses have been forced to close but there is a renewed interest in requiring face masks and sanitizing business premises.

This comes at the end of a summer when many people were feeling the need for masks was nearly at an end and many businesses had stopped requiring them.

Enterprise's Safeway grocery store was one that had the strictest mask requirements for most of the pandemic and then relaxed it early in the summer. But the store is requiring masks again.

"Our Enterprise Safeway began requiring masks following the governor's reinstatement of the mandate that required businesses to do so," said Jill McGinnis, director of communications and public affairs for Safeway in an email. "We will continue to put our associate and customer safety first and follow local and state guidelines."

On Aug. 11, Gov. Kate Brown ordered masks be worn indoors in public places by everyone age 5 and over beginning Aug. 13, the Chieftain reported. Brown urged — but did not mandate — the wearing of masks in crowded outdoor situations and that private



Wallowa County Chieftain, File

Many businesses in Wallowa County are not a fan of mask mandates, but most places are complying with the rules that were put in place in August 2021.

companies and organizations enact their own indoor mask policies.

Masks annoying

Many find the return to a mask mandate annoying, if nothing else.

Mike Goss, owner of the Dollar Stretcher in Enterprise, said he'll tell customers they should have a mask, but limited time and staff preclude a 100% compliance with Brown's mandate.

"We are trying to comply with the governor's mandate but I'm not going to be the city cop and force all customers to comply," he said. "People have to police themselves."

But another store is holding off. An assistant manager at the Market Place in Joseph said the mask

requirement isn't officially law yet.

"We're just waiting for (the governor) to actually put it into law and that'll force us to do it," Clint Lion said. "We've been waiting for the government mandate (on the public) to be signed and she hasn't signed it yet."

But KATU-TV reported Aug. 24 that the Oregon Occupational Safety and Health Administration will enforce the mandate.

For the most part, businesses that were contacted were reviving the precautions taken early in the pandemic that began in March 2020, although few actually have closed their doors as was required then.

Even a small operation like Favorite Finds on Main, an antique and col-

lectibles shop operated by Sondra Lozier, is muddling through.

"I'm a one-woman show; if I ever have 10 people in its usually a family," she said. "It's very trying in a lot of ways. ... The good side is I think people are slowing down."

She did, however, say the resurgent pandemic caused disappointment by forcing the cancellation of two events she's involved in. She organizes the Hells Canyon Mule Days, which was to be the weekend after Labor Day and had to be postponed until next year. She also is involved in organizing a quilt retreat that also had to be canceled.

"That's helped" slow things down, Lozier said.

She said that despite the

surge in cases, she believes folks here are generally safe.

"I've been in business so long that nothing really affects me," she said. "I'm just glad I live in Wallowa County because we are such a clean county."

Normal operation

Other businesses that have had to close in the past are mostly operating normally. Double Arrow Veterinary Clinic in Enterprise had its lobby closed for some months and has reopened it. However, all staff and customers are required to mask up when inside.

The Les Schwab Tire Center in Enterprise also finds the mask mandate annoying, but is complying

by having staff and customers wear masks.

"It's pretty tough ... especially for the guys working in the heat," said JR Pinea, assistant manager. "We're following the guidelines. ... It's tough for everybody, but we're doing it."

The pandemic surge doesn't seem to have affected the lodging industry much, although some are closing or preparing to close as tourist season winds down. A spokeswoman at the Ponderosa Motel in Enterprise said it and the Wilderness Inn — owned by the Naisbitt family — remain open and are continuing to take precautions by wearing face masks and thoroughly sanitizing rooms between customer stays.

Some restaurants are returning to early-pandemic protocols of outside seating or takeout.

Kim Moore, co-owner of the red Rooster Café in Enterprise, said her establishment closed for a short time earlier this summer, but it's reopened now.

Heavenly's in Enterprise has ceased its indoor seating, but everyone working is masked.

The change has been more to do with a difficulty in getting employees than anything, said co-owner Cindy Ellis.

"They're getting unemployment or they don't want to work, that's what I'm assuming," she said.

Bill Bradshaw is a reporter for the Wallowa County Chieftain. Have a business tip? Contact him at 541-398-5503 or bbradshaw@wallowa.com.



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CLUES ACROSS

1. Cold-weather jacket
6. And people who didn't make the list: Abbr.
10. Sage or fennel
14. Clock radio feature
15. Untainted
16. Burn balm
17. Candidate who lost to Truman
18. "Really?"
19. Little bit of land
20. Pause mark that blends in with its surroundings?
23. Last part of a date?
24. An ant has six of them
25. The "S" of GPS: Abbr.
27. Author Ayn
30. Lowest point
34. Feline-oriented section of lease?
37. "That's terrible!"
38. First Hebrew letter
39. Vow at a vow renewal
40. Blew it
41. Dangerously serious
42. List of starters?
44. Seedy bagel type
46. Word on an octagonal sign
47. YouTubers' money sources
48. Boorish
50. Fit together snugly
52. Word processing feature that went haywire when correcting 20-, 34- and 42-Across?
58. God who "died" in multiple Marvel movies
59. Long vehicle for a celeb
60. Hazards when unloading silverware from the dishwasher
62. "Sign me up!"
63. Supply-and-demand subj.
64. "Lovergirl" singer Marie
65. Warped
66. Mildewy, perhaps
67. Surgeon, informally

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CLUES DOWN

1. Rocket launch site
2. Baldwin of "It's Complicated"
3. Seafood items that are supposedly an aphrodisiac
4. Krispy ___
5. Youngest of the "little women"
6. "Game of Thrones," e.g.
7. Fanny
8. Popular sans serif font
9. Request for solitude
10. Noisy weather phenomenon
11. Someone ___ (not me)
12. Candy shaped like a truncated cone
13. Existed
21. Asia's shrinking sea
22. A fragile one is easily bruised
25. Lots
26. New Haven student
28. Depilatory brand
29. Bros
31. Like an endangered species
32. Standing up
33. ___ operandi
35. Refreshing gum flavor
36. Squishy
40. Most likely will
42. Spun one's wheels?
43. Skye of "Say Anything"
45. Mother, to a Brit
49. "Fear of Flying" author Jong
51. One may need a lift on a snowy day
52. Smooth-talking
53. City built on seven hills
54. Related by blood
55. "Let's go!"
56. Traffic sound
57. Nevada's third most populous city
61. Squid's ink holder



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