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Community update

As of Tuesday of this week, the Warm Springs Health and Wellness Center reported that three people on the reservation had active Covid-19, receiving daily monitoring by Community Health and IHS staff. An additional 19 were receiving monitoring for close contact.

On Monday of this week, Warm Springs IHS conducted 39 covid tests. This testing found one new positive, bringing the total active to three. As of Tuesday, one community member of the reservation was hospitalized with covid.

Overall during the past year, 82 people from the community have been hospitalized with Covid; and there have been 22 deaths as a result of the illness.

Vaccination total climbing steadily higher

By the latest count, as of earlier this week, the Indian Health Service at the Warm Springs Clinic had provided 2,268 primary doses of Covid-19 vaccination. In addition, IHS had provided 1,828 secondary doses.

Some of these vaccines were administered to qualifying members living off the reservation. However, most have gone, and are going to people of the immediate reservation community.

With the vaccination numbers steadily increasing, there is cause for optimism. Meanwhile, the obligation to continue the safety measures—for your-

self, family and community—is more important than ever, as some end is finally coming into view.

The number of vaccines administered so far can be compared to the overall population of the community, which would be roughly 4,000 people.

At some unknown point in the future will be 'herd immunity.' A way to define this is:

'When most of a population is immune to an infectious disease, this provides indirect protection—or population immunity, also called herd immunity or herd protection—to those who are not immune to the disease.'

So at some point, while the disease would still exist, Covid-19

would no longer be a deadly pandemic: Measles, mumps, polio and chickenpox are examples of infectious diseases that were once very common, and are now rare in the U.S. because vaccines helped to establish herd immunity.

The covid vaccination progress is good, yet the work and care will continue in the coming weeks and months. The Covid-19 Response Team update each day ends with a healthy reminder. This week, for example, while reporting the vaccine numbers and testing results, the concluding words are:

'Even with folks getting vaccinated for Covid-19, we all still need to wear a face mask in public spaces, maintain six feet of social

distance from others, and avoid gatherings with anyone who does not live with you.'

To schedule

The clinic now has vaccines available for any qualifying person over the age of 16. To schedule a Covid-19 vaccination appointment at the Health and Wellness Center call 541-553-2131. Eligibility for the vaccine in Warm Springs is for individuals and their family members who live or work on the reservation, or who are Indian Health Service eligible.

If you would like to be tested for Covid-19, check in at the front gate at the Warm Springs Health and Wellness Center, and they will direct you as to how to proceed.

Mr. Beavs: the Spiritual Beaver (right) by Ellen Taylor, now on display at the Museum at Warm Springs. The Mr. Beavs artwork is part of an Ellen Taylor exhibition—Dam It! Beavers and Us—coming up later this year at the High Desert Museum. In an artist's statement, Ms. Taylor says, "The beaver is a builder of mind, body and soul, and he symbolizes individuality, creativity, cooperation, persistence and harmony. While the beaver is well-known for building dams, these creatures make more of a difference to their ecosystem than many people realize." A hope for this exhibit is to inspire young people to learn more about the environment.

Photos courtesy MAWS



Prayer Warrior (above) by Ellen Taylor at the museum. Sitting Bull II (right); and Marilyn Goes Native (far right). The show—Sacred Reflections: The Art of Umatilla Artist Ellen Taylor—will be on display at the museum into June.



Job growth in the region

The latest jobs report for the region shows something of a surge in employment in March—the strongest monthly jobs gain since last summer, according to the Oregon Employment Department.

March of this year also marked one-year since the first pandemic impact on the economy.

In Central Oregon since last year, Jefferson County has seen slower job recovery compared to other parts of the region. However, "Despite a slower pace of recovery, Jefferson County is the nearest of the Central Oregon counties to a complete recovery from the Covid-19 shock," according to the Employment Department report.

Unemployment in the county in March of last year, before the pandemic effect, was at 4.2 percent.

The rate in March 2021 had recovered to 6.8 percent unemployment, with 40 jobs added last month, the report says. (See local job listings on page 5.)

Going well with return to in-person learning

With many safety precautions in place, the Jefferson County School District 509-J schools early this year began the second term on-site. This was an achievement, as less than a third of the schools in the state were able to re-open on site.

In the 509-J district, 80 percent of students chose to return to in-person learning; so the demand was obvious. "We're proud of that, and I think it's gone well," said district superintendent Ken Parshall. "Now we're focusing on learning, and following the safety protocols."

Graduation at Madras High School will be on Saturday, June 5. Last year the graduation ceremony followed the strict Covid-19 guidelines, with each graduate showing up in a family vehicle, exiting for a minute or two, accepting his or her diploma, and returning the vehicle.

With 2021 graduation a month and a half out, the high school is considering how the event should proceed. "Right

now we're planning both models," Mr. Parshall said. The hope would be to have the more traditional ceremony; though this decision will follow the state safety guidelines in place at the time.

In the meantime, all staff in the district schools who have chosen to, have received their vaccinations.

The new district superintendent, Jay Mathisen, coming here from George Fox University, will start July 1. "I think he's very well prepared," Parshall. "He was a teacher for a long time, and then a principal assistant, and human resources director." Mr. Mathisen's most recent position at George Fox University is that of Director of Educational Leadership.

School district board

Jefferson County School District 509-J Board of Directors chairwoman Laurie Danzuka is running unopposed for re-election to position 1 on the school board. Two other seats on the school board will be determined during the May 18

election, and both are contested, each with two candidates.

The candidates for position 2 on the board are Jamie Hurd of Madras, incumbent; and Lorien Stacona of Warm Springs. Candidates for position 3 are Jaylyn Suppah of Warm Springs, and Jacob Struck of Madras.

Jaylyn Suppah is the community planner for the Health and Human Services Branch and the Confederated Tribes. She serves on the tribes' Education Board; on the National Indian Education Association Board of Directors, and other education-related boards at the local, state and national level.

In her job Jaylyn manages a program focusing on school dropout prevention, high school and career/college readiness, and trauma-informed, culturally relevant curriculum development.

Equitable representation, more transparency, better communication and community involvement allow for the best school decisions, Ms. Suppah says. "My experience gives

me the best fit to achieve these goals," she says.

The current makeup of the board does not equitably represent the makeup of the student body and families who are served. As a result, voices of some parts of the district often go unheard, Jaylyn says. One of her goals would be to help address this and other challenges.

Jacob Struck is a business owner, and project superintendent with Skanska USA Building. Sharing his work experience, he started the construction Career and Technical Education program at Madras High School. He then taught the program for two years. Mr. Struck has three young children.

"I'm interested in serving on the board," Jacob says, "because I grew up in the school district. I have three kids in the district. I live in the community. I love it and want to see it improve every day. I want to bring my positive attitude and experience to the table to help improve our school district."

See 509-J Candidates on 2



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