

Local stores feel effects of coronavirus

By Danielle Frost

Smoke Signals staff writer

Local convenience stores haven't seen as much of the aisle-clearing that larger retailers have since the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic hit Oregon, but two were wiped out of high-demand items such as toilet paper and hand sanitizer in mid-March.

"I've worked in retail for my whole life and never seen anything like this," said Tim Jackson, Grand Ronde Food and Fuel general manager. "It's mainly been a rush on toilet paper and hand sanitizer."

Jackson said canned goods are still in stock, likely because convenience store prices tend to be higher than larger retailers, but he expects business to pick up once those items become unavailable elsewhere.

"I imagine more grocery stores won't be able to restock due to the demand and we'll get more people here because of that," Jackson said.

He added the busiest time was during the first week in March, but after the statewide schools closure and other public gathering bans that occurred, business began to slow.

"There just aren't very many people out right now," he said.

The C-Store, as it's also known, has restock deliveries every Tuesday and Friday. Jackson has ordered more toilet paper.

"My main goal now is just to get it here," he said. "Once it arrives, I'm sure it won't last long."

American Market Store Owner Rupal Patel said her sales have decreased by approximately \$600 per day.

"More people have come in for hand sanitizer, but somehow my sales have gone down," she said.

Patel's family also owns American Market 2, which is located on Highway 18, approximately a mile from the main store on Grand Ronde Road.

On Monday, March 16, there was no toilet paper, hand sanitizer or paper towels in stock, although a variety of canned goods were available.

Patel said the Grand Ronde Road location still has toilet paper.

"We restock every week, but right now I am not sure," she said. "Our supplier is Unified Grocers and they will stock the big retailers first and then the smaller ones. I'm going to have to wait and see how many things I can actually get." ■



Photo by Timothy J. Gonzalez

Laura Mix, left, and Scott Lenaburg pick up meals brought to them by Food Sustainability Administrative Assistant Patti LeClaire and Nutrition Program Manager Kristy Criss-Lawson at the Elders Activity Center on Tuesday, March 17. The center, which closed on Friday, March 13, for the remainder of March is providing 600 meals to help those in need caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Elders Activity Center continues to feed Elders during pandemic

By Danielle Frost

Smoke Signals staff writer

With many larger grocery stores running out of staple items, local Elders are grateful to have free, ready-to-heat lunches.

Nutrition Program Manager Kristy Criss-Lawson announced that the Elders Activity Center would close at 2 p.m. Friday, March 13, and remain shuttered through the end of March, but that Elders would still receive food.

Those who typically receive a home-delivered meal were given four meals on Tuesday, March 17, to get them through the week and Elders who eat at the center were asked to pull up to the back doors between 10 a.m. and 12:30 p.m. to receive four meals per Elder.

On Tuesday, March 17, Criss-Lawson and a handful of employees assisted Elders who arrived in a steady stream of vehicles.

"We are continually washing our hands and sanitizing the building," Criss-Lawson says. "If anyone feels ill, they are asked to not come to work."

She added that approximately 600 meals were made Tuesday and that the service would continue.

"But if people do not currently receive home delivery, please don't ask us to do it," Criss-Lawson says. "Pull up to the back entrance and we will bring your meals. Remember the food bank is available, too. We will continue to serve until we can't."

Regina Wheeler, who stopped by

Tuesday, says her family would still be fed without the meals, but it was a blessing to have the service available.

"This is a very good thing," she says. "We'd make out OK on our own, but right now we need to stay put, and this really helps."

Laura Mix and Scott Lenaburg appreciated the risk employees were taking to keep Elders fed.

"We are grateful they are doing this," Lenaburg said.

"I'm very thankful for everything," Mix added.

The elderly with underlying health concerns are the most at risk from the coronavirus, which is similar to the flu in causing fever, chills and difficulty breathing. People older than 60 have the highest death rates from contracting the virus.

According to the Oregon Health Authority, people who believe that they have been exposed to or contracted the coronavirus should call their health care provider to discuss whether they need to be seen before going into a clinic and potentially infecting others. The doctor will consult with local public health department staff members to determine if testing for the coronavirus is necessary.

To stay informed about the Tribal government's continued response to the coronavirus outbreak, visit the Tribal government's website at www.grandronde.org or its Facebook page, or continue following *Smoke Signals* at www.smokesignals.org or on Facebook. ■

Health Clinic, Tribal Court modify services

By Dean Rhodes

Smoke Signals editor

As the Tribe's response to the novel coronavirus pandemic evolves, the Tribal government's response remains fluid.

On Tuesday, March 17, the Health and Wellness Center announced more modifications to its services.

The Medical clinic will accept walk-in medication assisted treatment patients and any visits that will affect a patient's immediate health if delayed.

Dental will only accept emergency cases and Optometry has suspended its services.

Lab/X-ray is offering all services with limited staff and the Pharmacy has gone to all mail order.

Behavioral Health has no on-site staff, but is offering check-ins and telemedicine appointments.

Community Health is offering all services with provisions to Elders and the infirm being prioritized.

Adult Foster Care is offering all services, but visitors will receive a symptom check before being granted entry.

Health Services Executive Director Kelly Rowe said that

all patients entering the clinic will be met at the entrance to be triaged for possible COVID-19 symptoms and receive a mask if necessary. If they do have symptoms, they will be directed to the old Behavioral Health area. All appointment reminders include screening questions to ensure patient health and staff protection.

"These modifications are to protect our patients, community and staff, and best utilize our protective equipment essential for treating patients that may have the virus" Rowe said.

Meanwhile, Tribal Court announced a temporary standing order regarding its services, including only holding hearings in April via the telephone.

The Tribal Court's lobby will be closed to the public until May 1 and all notary and facilitation services are suspended until then as well.

Staff in the Tribal Court office will be available by phone, mail or e-mail at 503-879-2303 or Court@grandronde.org.

Meanwhile, entry into the Governance Center was reduced to one door so that Security personnel can monitor visitors. Walk-ins are strongly discouraged. ■