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On March 8, Brown declared a state of emergency over the virus. By then, there were 15 presumptive and confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Oregon, with seven counties reporting at least one case. By March 11, WHO declared the coronavirus to be a pandemic — a recognition that the virus had, or would soon, spread around the globe.

“This is not just a public health crisis, it is a crisis that will touch every sector — so every sector and every individual must be involved in the fight,” said WHO Director General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus.

Oregon’s governor began issuing executive orders, limiting gatherings at first and eventually closing schools, canceling events and restricting access to parks. Governments, businesses and schools began holding virtual meetings and many people began to work from home. Medical centers prepared for the worst, with community

members stepping in to sew handmade personal protective equipment, such as masks and hospital gowns.

On March 14, a 70-year-old Multnomah County man was the first person to die from COVID-19 in Oregon. Three days later, Lane County Public Health (LCPH) was notified of the first positive COVID-19 test in the county — a 69-year-old man in the Eugene/Springfield area. The first death reported was a 60-year-old woman, who passed away March 14. A COVID-19 test was administered after her death.

Locally, Lane County Emergency Management groups began to meet, including City of Florence, PeaceHealth, Florence Police Department, SVFR, WLAD and Siuslaw and Mapleton school districts. The schools began to deliver food daily to students’ families. Restaurants joined in

the food distribution.

More and more locations shut down, including Siuslaw Public Library and Three Rivers Casino Resort, and the Dunes City and Florence city councils declared states of emergency

bridge the gap for the thousands of people left unemployed or furloughed from the pandemic. Rent and utility protections went into place.

LCPH continued to monitor COVID-19 spread in

was no Queen Rhododendra and King of the Coast from the Royal Courts, but all seniors were recognized as the “Quarantine Court.” It was the first time since World War II that the festival was canceled.

outdoor seating allowances for local restaurants.

At the end of the month, several businesses briefly closed as employees tested positive for COVID-19. After deep cleaning, they all reopened.

OHA reported 17,088 confirmed cases of COVID-19 by July 28, with statewide deaths totaling 289. LCPH authorities confirmed a total of 458 cases in Lane County, resulting in 3 deaths.

LCPH Public Information Officer Jason Davis said he was not surprised that Florence was experiencing an uptick in COVID-related closings.

“Absolutely, we at Lane County Health feel and understand that Florence has unique challenges as people go to the coast after being stuck at home for so long,” he said. “The coast is more and more of an option for people looking to get away for a few days. We have discussed in our meetings the number of cases being tracked by zip code — and we are well aware of what’s going on out there.”

**AUGUST 2020**

COVID-19 stats as of Aug. 1 were 474 cases in Lane County. The state reached 18,131 cases and 316 deaths.

Before August, school districts were hoping to reopen in a hybrid model. Brown announced new metrics, which meant all schools would remain in CDL through at least October. And, while some schools were able to hold practices for certain sports, no one could predict what sports would look like under COVID-19.

Oregon School Activities Association (OSAA) determined that practices could continue, but actual contests would wait until January.

“Going forward, I hope we can put things together for kids to play the sports that they love. Right now, hope is something that we can all use a little dose of,” said Siuslaw Athletic Director Chris Johnson.

Oregon RAIN (Regional Accelerator and Innovation Network) worked to help businesses adapt to virtual life. It launched a 10-week sales and marketing accelerator that was open to people all over the state.

Wildfires broke out across the West Coast, including multiple fires in Mapleton set by an arsonist. COVID-19 caused some delays in sending aid, though people still raised money and donated food, water and supplies to the relief mission.

**SEPTEMBER 2020**

Labor Day again brought the crowds to the area, with a packed Old Town making it difficult to social distance. This was mostly welcome for area merchants and those in the tourism industry, as well as the Port of Siuslaw.

By the end of the month, Oregon saw 457 new COVID-19 reported cases in one day, with 50 of those in Lane County. LCPH reported 1,164 cases and 18 deaths. The 97439 zip code had 22 reported cases.

The steadily rising number of cases prompted Dr. Jim McGovern, with PeaceHealth, to say, “More than six months have passed since the pandemic began and COVID-19 is very much still with us. In fact, it appears as though the preparations made by hospitals and other care providers at the beginning of the outbreak will now need to be utilized. We are trending up toward a significant surge as we are now seeing our highest number of positive COVID-19 cases to date.”

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**“The best thing to do is try and stay home as much as you can. This virus, for it to succeed, has to have close contact between people. We are directly contributable to its success. If we take close contact out of the equation, and essentially cut the gas lines for the disease, we make it so it can’t do its job. Stay home. Don’t be the person that contracts it.”**

— Lane County Public Health PIO Jason Davis, July 2020

**JUNE 2020**

On June 2, OHA confirms the first COVID-19 case in Florence’s 97439 zip code. The first mass-testing event does not occur until the

end of June, when LCPH hosted three free COVID-19 testing options in the Siuslaw region.

Lane County began Phase II of Kate Brown’s reopening plan for Oregon on June 5. This phase included opening museums, movie theaters, bowling alleys and arcades, allowed recreational sports, loosened restaurant and bar curfew restrictions and expanded outdoor gatherings to 100 people.

However, on June 15, Brown slowed the state’s reopening process. “In order to ensure that the virus is not spreading too quickly, I am putting all county applications for further reopening on hold. ... It is time to press pause for one week before any further reopening,” she said.

By mid-June, Lane County reported 88 positive COVID-19 test results, with three deaths.

Locally, Boys and Girls Clubs of Western Lane County was able to open its doors after being authorized as an emergency childcare center. The two school districts continued to serve meals to their students and made plans for reopening schools in comprehensive distance learning (CDL) in the fall.

Siuslaw Outreach Services raised over \$120,000 through grants to help toward rent and utilities through its COVID-19 Assistance Fund.

**JULY 2020**

On July 9, OHA reported 389 new confirmed and presumptive cases of COVID-19, bringing the state total to 11,188. It was the highest single-day rise in the case count state since the start of the pandemic. In addition, the state’s death toll reached 230.

By July 15, the Florence area had 12 confirmed cases. This prompted LCPH officials to urge people to “stay home” as much as possible.

Midmonth, the City of Florence announced a new parking plan for Historic Old Town, which expanded

in their cities.

Help was soon announced, however, as the U.S. Senate voted unanimously to approve the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act, a \$2.2 trillion fiscal stimulus package, which the House of Representatives passed.

**APRIL 2020**

April began with applications for the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) loans authorized under the CARES Act. In the first weekend, the staff at Oregon Pacific Bank received hundreds of applications.

Brown officially closed in-person schools for the remainder of the school year. “School, and learning, will continue as best as we can using remote means,” she said.

Brown also joined the governors of Washington and California on April 13 in a “Western States Pact,” which outlined a shared approach to restarting public life and business. The pact agreed on the principles of prioritizing residents’ health, guiding reopening decisions by science rather than politics and working together effectively among states.

Life in Western Lane County adapted to stay-at-home measures, including holding drive-by birthday parades, teacher parades and virtual meetings. City Lights Cinemas began to offer film streaming. Mapleton School District launched “Be the Light,” which honored its 2020 seniors by lighting up the football stadium each Friday night until graduation.

People began to receive their economic impact payment (also called stimulus checks) from the federal government. This helped

the community. However, Siuslaw News was the first to report that Lane County did not have a way to confirm the location of COVID-19 cases in rural parts of the county. Instead, it either reported cases as “in Eugene/Springfield” or “in a rural area outside of Eugene/Springfield.” Soon after, OHA began to offer metrics for each zip code.

**MAY 2020**

In the months since February, Oregon lost 360,000 jobs due to the pandemic, equaling 18 percent of all jobs in the state. Oregon ranked 39th in the country for COVID-19 cases, and the deaths per capita was one of the lowest in the nation at just two per 100,000, compared to Washington’s 11. By comparison, New York had 121 deaths per 100,000.

The month of May saw the beginning of a lift of restrictions in Oregon. PeaceHealth was able to open for elective procedures and Brown announced the limited reopening of some outdoor parks and recreation areas.

On May 7, the governor announced a framework for rebuilding a “safe and strong Oregon,” including new guidance on the phased reopening process. Counties had to have a decline in COVID-19 cases and have hospital capacity. In Phase I, restaurants and bars could open for sit-down service; personal care and services businesses, including barbers and salons, could open; and in-person gatherings of up to 25 people were allowed.

Lane County submitted its proposal and entered Phase 1 on May 15. This led to the reopening of Three Rivers Casino Resort, as well as Siuslaw Public Library accepting item returns. However, the 113th Rhododendron Festival was not held. However, community members hold a small virtual celebration and a special virtual “parade” coordinated by the City of Florence. There

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