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Full forecast on A5

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Protocols prevent LCPH from reporting virus locations in rural communities

By **NED HICKSON & JARED ANDERSON**
FOR THE SENTINEL

The Siuslaw region of Western Lane County may have had its first confirmed case of the novel coronavirus COVID-19.

The patient, a woman in her 50s, returned home this week after being hospitalized with the illness, the first symptoms of which began in late February.

Lane County Public Health (LCPH) announced Thursday that the woman lives in a “rural area outside of Eugene/Springfield,” and reporters with *Siuslaw News*

received independent reports that the patient does live in the Florence area of the Siuslaw region.

However, Lane County will neither confirm nor deny whether the patient lives in Florence.

This is due to a rule implemented by the county that does not allow LCPH representatives to report residency of any cases living outside of the Eugene-Springfield area. Instead, all Lane County cit-

ies outside that area — including Cottage Grove and Creswell — are lumped into the designation “outside Eugene/Springfield” or “Rural Lane County.”

Because of current LCPH protocol, those living in Lane County but outside Eugene/Springfield will not have official confirmation of any cases of COVID-19 despite evidence that there is at least one confirmed case already.

LCPH says the reason for the current protocol is patient privacy and safety. Recent examples of discriminatory actions against

See **LCPH 3A**

“I think the general public is not interested in shaming people ... for getting sick, especially since we understand how contagious this illness is. It’s no fault of the individual.”

— Jason Davis, Lane County Public Health

NDSB extends outreach efforts

By **NICK SNYDER**
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As all corners of American life transition to a new way of operating on-the-fly, North Douglas School District (NDSB) is finding that the connections our institutions are just as important as the services they provide.

Last week, NDSB began using its Mid-Columbia bus services to deliver meals, education packets and even Chromebooks on their regular routes to the 250-plus students in the district in an effort to continue serving the community while observing Oregon Department of Education and social-distancing guidelines.

It became immediately apparent to Superintendent Terry Bennett that providing these deliveries was about much more than keeping students’ noses to the educational grindstone.

“This is what schools have always done,” Bennett said. “Traditionally, you go all the way back and [schools] reflect your community and they meet that community’s needs.”

Particularly in a smaller community like Drain,

See **NDSB 6A**

Parade for their ‘peeps’



PHOTOS BY DAMIEN SHERWOOD/COTTAGE GROVE SENTINEL



Harrison Elementary School teachers and staff drove through residential neighborhoods on April 3 with signs, smiles and words of encouragement for Harrison students, who waved back to the procession. In keeping with state guidelines, the district is embracing “distance learning,” and keeping school doors closed during the public health crisis. “[The idea] came from caring adults who wanted to find a way to connect with their students,” said Harrison Principal Heidi Brown.

LCC’s CG campus adjusts to lay-offs

By **NICK SNYDER**
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After nearly a month of COVID-19 gripping our national consciousness, the wider impact of the virus has now hit Lane Community College.

On Wednesday, March 25, Lane Community College (LCC) and Chief Human Resources Officer Shane Turner announced that the college would be laying off about 400 employees — around 100 of whom haven’t been active since fall term — in direct response to state government orders for education to be conducted in a remote setting and in order to stem the spread of the virus.

Many of the 400 jobs were part-time, temporary or only needed for onsite operations of classes at LCC, such as janitorial services, that have now been rendered unnecessary by remote-learning operations.

The jettisoning of jobs, however, didn’t have as big of an impact locally in Cottage Grove as the campus is small and limited in the types of courses and services it offers.

“As far as staffing goes, we have about two

See **LCC 8A**

New restrictions mean dealing with death from a distance

By **DAMIEN SHERWOOD**
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In times of mourning, people often seek solace in the proximity of others. In times of a public health crisis, however, funeral homes have been forced to change the way people find that solace.

“COVID-19, it really punishes those who are grieving and going through the death and dying process,” said Marc Lund, part owner

of Smith Lund Mills Funeral Chapel & Crematorium.

On March 23, Gov. Kate Brown issued an executive order directing Oregonians to restrict gatherings to 10 people or less and to keep a distance between each other of at least six feet.

In the process of grieving for a recently departed loved one, such limitations can be less than ideal.

“It’s been challenging because we’re in the business of helping

people memorialize their funerals and say goodbye,” said Lund. “You’re saying goodbye to your loved one and the life that life lived. And the need to have that ceremony is really powerful.”

By Lund’s estimate, his business services hundreds of cases per year and he is now playing the balancing act of maintaining an essential service for the area while adhering to state directives.

“In Cottage Grove, most fami-

lies — if they’re going to have a memorial service — would have more than 10 people show up,” he said. “It’s very difficult to stay under that number.”

Some families have been advised to hold an intimate event presently and postpone holding a public event until later in the year when social gatherings are no longer prohibited. In lieu of that, Lund

See **GRIEVE 8A**

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