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Coronavirus Coverage
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WEATHER

Sunny skies with a high of 57 and a low tonight of 33.
Full forecast on A5

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Lane County placed on state's coronavirus 'Watch List'

Meanwhile, neighboring Douglas County calls on residents to curtail the spread

BY DAMIEN SHERWOOD & MARK BRENNAN
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On Oct. 16, Oregon Gov. Kate Brown placed Lane County on the state's COVID-19 watch list for the first time following a two-week increase in confirmed or suspected cases in the county.

Benton, Clatsop, Malheur and Umatilla counties are also currently on the list.

According to Brown, presence on the watch list does not indicate that the county is being moved back to Phase I and is only a precautionary measure intended to help policymakers and COVID-19 response teams to prioritize resources and assistance to counties that are seeing the broadest spread of

COVID-19. The assistance offered to a particular county depends on the assessment of its needs, often including epidemiological assistance and staffing support.

"I think we're doing a very good job in Cottage Grove. But the reality is, the rest of the county impacts us ... So we want to make sure to do our part if nothing else."

— Cottage Grove Mayor Jeff Gowling

Brown stated that the Oregon Health Authority (OHA) is working with Lane County Public Health to address the county's increase in community spread, which she attributed in part to social gatherings.

"There is no question that the spread of COVID-19 in Lane

County is connected — to a degree — to student social activities," said Brown, referring to cases which originated from students attending the University of Oregon in Eugene. "Social

gatherings, like off-campus parties, are incredibly dangerous and spread this disease. Let me be clear, though: it will take the entire county working together to bring these COVID-19 numbers under control. Once COVID-19 is spreading in the community, small family

get-togethers can also lead to dozens of infections."

As of Oct. 21, the University of Oregon had reported 319 cases for the month of October alone, an increase of 49 cases since the governor's announcement. Overall, the university has reported 470 cases in the university community since June 1.

Counties are placed on the watch list when there is a "sporadic case" rate of 50 or more per 100,000 in the preceding two weeks and the county has more than 5 sporadic cases in the same timeframe.

Sporadic cases are those which cannot be traced to a source, indicating community spread.

See **WATCH 6A**



Creative Chaos continues to provide small group activities such as mask making (left) and socially-distanced dancing (above) at Opal Center.

The show must go on

Cottage Grove theaters look forward to 'next act' after the pandemic.

BY DAMIEN SHERWOOD
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If all the world's a stage, this year has produced something of a tragedy.

None may feel this so acutely as the performance arts as curtains have been drawn on theater shows in Cottage Grove since Oregon's lockdown began in spring.

This means local venues Cottage Theatre and the Opal Center

for Arts and Education are navigating a year without the benefit of ticket sales.

"Technically, under Phase 2, we could theoretically operate with a lot of restrictions," said Susan Goes, executive director at Cottage Theatre. "We ran the arithmetic early on and figured we could get about 30 people in our auditorium."

The restrictions, however, would create intelligibility problems, obstruct facial expressions and create challenges for

close-quarters scenes on stage — not to mention cause concerns regarding singing and vocal projection.

The royalties paid per performance would outweigh the revenue as well.

"It makes no sense economically to perform with just 30 audience members," said Goes.

Spatial restrictions are especially problematic for a modest venue like Opal Center.

See **THEATER 9A**

SLSD delays implementing hybrid model

BY DAMIEN SHERWOOD
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Due to the recent rise in COVID-19 infection and test positivity rates in Lane County and in the State of Oregon, South Lane School District (SLSD) has announced it will not begin its in-person hybrid model which had originally been scheduled to start on Nov. 2.

"We look forward to bringing all students back into our buildings when county and state metrics allow us to do so," announced the district in a newsletter. "For now, we will continue in distance learning. We will keep you updated about a potential start date for hybrid learning in our weekly newsletter for staff and families (The South Lane Connection Download)."

The Oregon Department of Education allows an exemption for K-3 students to attend in-person classes providing certain metrics are met. Lane County surpassed those metrics during the week of Sept. 13.

To return to in-person instruction, school districts must be in a county that meets certain criteria.

See **SLSD 8A**



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