Governor orders most businesses to close

By Dick Hughes
Oregon Capital Bureau

SALEM — Gov. Kate Brown on Monday directed most Oregonians to stay home except for getting groceries, going to work or handling important activities that cannot wait.

Brown said she was acting because Oregonians had not followed her urging to stay home and practice social distancing.

"Thousands crowded the beaches of our coastal communities, our trails, our parks and our city streets, potentially spreading COVID-19 and endangering the lives of others across the state. Now, I'm ordering it. To save lives and protect our community," she said in a statement accompanying her order.

Key provisions of her order include:

• Oregonians should stay home whenever possible.

• Violating the order could be a Class C misdemeanor.

• Except for members of the same residential household, all non-essential social and recreational gatherings of individuals are prohibited immediately, regardless of size, unless people can stay at least six feet apart.

• Retail businesses are closed if it is difficult to avoid close personal contact. Examples include arcades, barber shops, hair salons, gyms and fitness studios, skating rinks, theaters and yoga studios.

• Businesses allowed to remain open must implement social-distancing policies "consistent with guidance from the Oregon Health Authority. With the exception of those businesses, shopping malls must close, whether indoor or outdoor.

• Playgrounds, sports courts, skate parks and some other outdoor recreation facilities are closed. Facilities allowed to remain open, apparently including golf courses, must strictly follow social distancing guidelines.

• Child care facilities are restricted to "stable groups of 10 or fewer children," meaning that the children must be in the same group each day.

• Public and private campgrounds are closed, although veterans and camp hosts can remain in state parks. RV parks and other housing may remain open.

• State agencies generally are closed to the public, except by appointment in some circumstances, and state employees should work remotely if possible. Brown urged local, tribal and federal offices to do the same.

"Staying home both keeps you safe from infection and ensures you do not unknowingly infect others," Brown said. "None of us have ever been through this before, and that means there is no way to know exactly what lies ahead."

Through much of the weekend, the governor had been resisting issuing a statewide stay-home, and her announcement was not accompanied by a press conference to answer questions. The city of Portland, backed by the leaders of the metro-area counties, was prepared to issue its own stay-home order.

"It is important we do things on a statewide level so we not move the problem around to different places," said Sen. Arnie Roblan, D-Coos Bay, during a legislative committee meeting after the order was issued.

The coronavirus response committee continued to pore through proposals to help Oregon businesses and residents respond to the economic and health aspects of the pandemic. On Monday morning, they discussed such issues unemployment benefits and potential delay of the new corporate activity tax.

Sen. Elizabeth Steiner Hayward, D-Portland, asked about economic assistance for independent contractors, such as hairdressers, who are not eligible for unemployment. It is unclear whether such businesses will be eligible for federal assistance.

"They are the smallest of the small business owners," said committee co-chair Rep. Paul Holvey, D-Eugene. "That's something we've got to figure out."

Holvey said most actions taken in the expected special legislative session would be temporary measures, not permanent state policy.

Businesspeople and Republican legislators have proposed that agencies "pause all non-essential rulemaking and workgroups not related to the COVID-19 response." Holvey said the governor may need changes in state law to have that flexibility.

Rep. Duane Stark, R-Grants Pass, said regulations on workers' maximum hours and on predictive scheduling are among those that should be eased as employers deal with coronavirus. Sen. Lynn Findley, R-Vale, said county offices should be allowed to open fewer hours than required by state laws.

"I want to make sure we take care of our employers and our employees," said Sen. Denyc Boles, R-Salem, adding that she wanted to underscore the uncertainty that lies ahead.

CENTER

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education program. Clients can attend classes on prenatal and infant care, parenting and Bible studies and earn "baby bucks" they can spend at the Rachel Center for baby furniture and other items.

The idea, Hoelscher said, is to help clients build their self-esteem by gaining new life skills while also acquiring things they need for their babies.

Although the Rachel Center gives away basic clothing, as well as other necessities such as diapers and formula, for free, Hoelscher said clients can also use baby bucks for fancy dresses and other special clothes.

"Nice things that they feel good about because they've earned them," she said.

Smokin' Joe's Chili Contest and silent auction is named for Joe Dethloff, a Rock Creek resident and Knights of Columbus member who started the event at St. Francis de Sales. Dethloff died in 2002.

Although Dethloff actually started the event in 1989, before the Rachel Center opened, Reidy said the Center became a main recipient of the event's proceeds.

The contest and auction continued after Dethloff's death, as his wife, Arlene, supported its continuation.

Arlene died in 2017.

Baker City's Knights of Columbus Council 849 decided to resume the event this year and donate proceeds to the Rachel Center, said Huntington, who is the Council's grand knight.

Reidy, who is the Council's financial secretary, said more than 50 people and businesses donated items for the silent auction, which raised about $1,500.

"It's really fantastic to have such a giving community," Reidy said.

The chili contest was also successful, with 10 entries.

Huntington said he's optimistic that the event honoring Dethloff has new momentum and will continue to be an important source of money for the Rachel Center.

The Knights of Columbus have contributed to the Center in other ways, including improvements to its office at 2192 Court Ave.

Hoelscher said the Rachel Center helps about 200 local families and sees an average of 40 clients per month.

In addition to programs such as Earn While Your Learn, the Center offers free pregnancy tests, counseling, maternity clothes, prenatal classes and information about adoption.

"If we're going to help a client choose life, we have a responsibility to help them on that journey," Hoelscher said.

CROSSROADS

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Savage and the center's other staff will work from home.

"We're all trying to tighten our hours as much as we can," she said.

While they won't release class schedules yet, she said the staff will continue to plan for offerings when the art center is able to open. Many programs will depend on whether the school district will need to go into the summer months.

"We need to be locked and loaded for when we get to the other side," she said.

She has written for several emergency grants to help with operating costs and scholarships for classes.

"I need to give my community hope," Savage said. "I think it's critical we get kids engaged as soon as possible."

In the meantime, she said the center donated all rubber gloves and respirators on hand to Saint Alphonsus Medical Center.

"We encourage all artists and community members who might have supplies which can be used by the medical field to donate them," she said.

When talking about the current uncertain situation, Savage said she's looking to the past for hope.

"Arts and culture entities survived during the war. That's the narrative I'm holding on to," she said.

Updates are being posted on the Crossroads Facebook page.

She said anyone wishing to contribute to Crossroads can do so online to www.crossroads-arts.org or by mailing donation to 2020 Auburn Ave., Baker City, OR 97814.

To contact Crossroads staff during the closure, send an email to:

• Ginger Savage, executive director: ginger@crossroads-arts.org

• Cherie Ward, education coordinator: cherie@crossroads-arts.org

• Crystal Rainwater, art director: crystal@crossroads-arts.org

OLCC rule changes allow curbside pickup for alcohol

By Michael Kohn
EO Media Group

SALEM — The Oregon Liquor Control Commission approved emergency rules that will allow bars and restaurants to make curbside deliveries of alcoholic beverages.

In addition to curbside delivery, the commission also approved an emergency rule that will allow same-day delivery of alcoholic beverages until 2:30 a.m. The commission put the rules in place at a monthly meeting on Thursday, according to a press release.

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Local Briefing

STATE PARKS CLOSED AT LEAST UNTIL MAY 8

SALEM — The Oregon Parks and Recreation Department closed the entire state park system starting Monday due to concerns about the coronavirus.

The closure will last at least until May 8.

The department had previously announced it would close campgrounds starting April 3, but based on guidance from Oregon Gov. Kate Brown, and from crowds at some parks over the weekend, the agency decided to close all parks.

All daytime park services will be closed, including parking and restrooms. Campers will be refunded for all canceled nights.

"We would have preferred an orderly shutdown of the system and to remain open for daytime visits, but our concern for the effects on rural health care systems requires us to move up and expand our plans," Lisa Sumption, Parks Department director, said in a press release. "We know this will cause a disruption, since we're suspending service to everyone, even people who live near a park. Reducing contact between people is more important than recreation at the moment."

The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife has also closed its Wildlife Areas to overnight camping.

This affects the Elkhorn Wildlife Area west of North Powder, although camping there, and all other public entry, is closed until April 10 to protect elk that winter on the property.

AUCTIONS FOR BIG GAME TAGS CHANGED

SALEM — Several Oregon big game tag auctions are being rescheduled from original dates printed in the 2020 Big Game Regulations due to coronavirus concerns.

The Lewis and Clark chapter of Safari Club International (SCI) has rescheduled its auction for a statewide deer tag for Friday, March 27, at 7:30 p.m. The live auction will be bid-by-phone only. Hunters wishing to bid on the deer tag should call Jeremy Coburn, of SCI at 702-622-7664 prior to the auction.

The Oregon Hunters Association Mid-Willamette Chapter's auction of a statewide elk tag will still occur on April 4 at 8:30 p.m., but the event will be bid-by-phone only. Those hunters wishing to bid should call Bryan Cook at 971-270-7035 prior to the auction.

The Oregon Bowhunters has rescheduled their auction for the Rocky Mountain goat tag to Friday, May 8, at 7 p.m. The live auction will be bid-by-phone only and will be live streamed by Oregon Bowhunters for the public to view. Hunters wishing to bid on the goat tag should call Wayne Endicot at 541-556-7039 or 541-746-9711 by 6 p.m. on May 8 to register for the auction.

The National Wild Turkey Federation Central Oregon Chapter's April 4 auction of a statewide deer tag has been rescheduled for May 23 at 7 p.m. The live auction will be bid-by-phone only. Hunters wishing to participate should call Jason Preston at 541-693-4597 prior to the auction.

For other remaining auctions, see the regulations for a contact and be sure to express your interest in bidding prior to the auction.

All money raised by big game auction and raffle tags directly fund big game management, big game research, and habitat and hunter access projects. All auction and raffle tags are in addition to controlled and general season tags. Any weapon legal for that species may be used.

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