# Oregon News

EVENT ORGANIZER SAYS EVERYONE COMPLIED WITH SOCIAL DISTANCING GUIDELINES

## Barrel racing event in Redmond raises ire of Deschutes Co. officials

**By Garrett Andrews**
The (Bend) Bulletin

The (Bend) Bullet file photo

Deschutes County District Attorney John Hummel called the organizer of a barrel racing event "reckless" for allowing the event to continue after Oregon Gov. Kate Brown issued an executive order urging Oregonians to stay home as much as possible to reduce the spread of coronavirus.

Four days after Gov. Kate Brown urged Oregonians to stay home to "the maximum extent possible" to slow the coronavirus pandemic, 44 rodeo competitors traveled with their horses to an arena outside Redmond for a barrel racing event called Corona Can 360.

Organizer Austin Hogue said in planning the event, which was held March 27 and 28, he sought to comply with Brown's stay-home executive order and received guidance on social distancing from the Deschutes County Sheriff's Office.

But Deschutes County District Attorney John Hummel said the event clearly violates the spirit of the governor's order, and the sheriff's office should not have assisted Hogue.

"He's reckless, and he put our community at risk," Hummel said of Hogue. "And I don't know why anyone bent over backwards to help him."

The event was created to replace the High Desert Stampede, which was canceled March 12 due to the governor's social distancing orders in place at the time — gatherings of 250 people or more were prohibited.

A Professional Rodeo Cowboys Association event, the stampede is a major draw for Redmond, and this year was to be the biggest yet, with more than 10,000 competitors, spectators, volunteers and vendors from around the country expected, according to board chairman Denis Fast.

In early March, the board briefly considered a "fanless" rodeo as an alternative to canceling, but decided there was no way to host the event while encouraging social distancing, Fast said.

"It's just something that doesn't work for a rodeo," Fast said.

Hogue said his barrel racing event started as a joke on Facebook, with a parody flier advertising a beer vendor, Chinese food and overnight parking. "HIT 3 BARRELS WIN FREE CASE OF CORONA."

The flier elicited so much support Hogue said he decided to stage the event for real.

"The original thought behind it was to give a chance to these people who were coming from out of town, who had already scheduled it and spent the money to prepare for it, to give them a place to come and compete," Hogue told The Bulletin.

Hogue said he wanted the event to comply with the governor's public health orders so he reached out to the Deschutes County Sheriff's Office and met several times with the office's lawyer. They devised an unusual racing format for the event — a competition where the athletes competed alone in an empty arena with a flagger standing outside.

*"We've had a gigantic amount of positive praise about this. The girls felt safe. They felt like they mattered. I was told everything we were doing was legal."*

**— Austin Hogue, organizer of a barrel racing event**

*"He's sticking up a big middle finger to every Oregonian who's complying with the spirit of this order. And, you know, people have died."*

**— Deschutes County District Attorney John Hummel, talking about Hogue**

Parking spaces in the area behind the arena would be separated by 100 feet. A volunteer stood near the entrance to make sure no more than 22 people were on the property at a time, including staff. Two security guards would patrol and hand out informational fliers about COVID-19 from the Deschutes County Sheriff's Office.

Everyone followed the rules "to a T," Hogue said.

"It was safer to come to our event than it was to go to Walmart or Petco or Home Depot, or a park," he said. "Our event was held with the utmost safety and health concerns in mind."

A deputy spent time at the event but did not write any citations, Hogue said.

"They came out, spent 15 minutes walking around and told us, 'You're doing a great job,' " he said.

Speaking for the sheriff's office, Capt. Paul Garrison said several sources were consulted while trying to interpret the governor's executive order, including the county's legal department and the sheriff's office lawyer.

"We took this information to determine the best law enforcement response and approached it with a focus on education and voluntary compliance to work with the cooperative event organizer," Garrison wrote in an email to The Bulletin. "We do not have the authority to shut these events down. In the case event organizers do not comply with the Governor's Executive Order then enforcement action can be taken as a last resort."

A spokeswoman for the governor's office said unnecessary travel risks spreading coronavirus to new communities across the state, particularly to rural areas where hospital capacity is very limited.

"We are asking all Oregonians to abide by the spirit of the order, which is to stay home to the maximum extent possible, which will also allow local law enforcement officials to focus on true public health and safety emergencies," said interim press secretary Liz Merah.

The day before the barrel racing event, the Oregon Health Authority said the state was "at a critical moment in the fight against the disease," but that social distancing could have a large effect on the rising number of cases.

Since the stay-home order was issued March 23, some Oregonians have expressed confusion with its provisions.

A day after it was issued, Deschutes County Sheriff Shane Nelson made waves with a video stating the sheriff's office won't arrest or ticket those who violate the stay-home order.

The short clip earned praise on social media, but it put the sheriff's office in a position opposed by other Oregon law enforcement agencies, which have said they will arrest people for violating the governor's order, though as a last resort after educating people about the order.

Hummel said he was consulted about the barrel racing event by the sheriff's office and he advised the agency that deputies should be stationed outside to warn attendees they'd be ticketed if they entered.

"Look, we know where this guy's coming from. He's sticking up a big middle finger to every Oregonian who's complying with the spirit of this order," Hummel said. "And, you know, people have died. People will die. First responders and medical professionals are risking their lives for the safety of our community, and this idiot is putting people's lives at risk because he wants to have a fun little party on the weekend. Well, you know what, to hell with him. He thinks he found a cutesy little legal loophole — good for him. The guy is an embarrassment to our community."

Though Hogue doesn't appear to have violated the order's social distancing provisions, Hummel said the event appears to violate Provision 22 of the order, which directs Oregonians to minimize nonessential travel around the state.

For his part, Hogue said the event was never intended to insult the governor.

"We've had a gigantic amount of positive praise about this," he said. "The girls felt safe. They felt like they mattered."

Hogue expressed surprise when told the local district attorney believes the people who came to his event could be charged with a crime.

"That's not what I was told," Hogue said. "I was told everything we were doing was legal."

## Local Briefing

### Timberline Lodge lays off 471 employees at lodge and ski area

PORTLAND (AP) — The historic Timberline Lodge has slashed hundreds of jobs because of the coronavirus pandemic.

Timberline Lodge told the state in a mandatory Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notification that it laid off 471 employees at its lodge and at the adjacent ski area on Mount Hood, The Oregonian/OregonLive reported. According to the notice, the layoffs happened over eight days and ended Tuesday. Employees were told the job cuts would be permanent.

Employers throughout Oregon have announced mass layoffs amid the coronavirus crisis.

In response to the coronavirus pandemic, Oregon Gov. Kate Brown issued an order March 16 barring public gatherings with over 25 people. On March 23, she issued a stay at home order, which forced certain businesses to shutter, including ski resorts. Because of the mandates and the sudden downturn in business, Timberline Lodge officials said they had to make the decision to lay off employees at the ski resort and lodge.

Landmark hotel and brewpub chain McMenamins, which operates 62 hotels, movie theaters, restaurants and bars throughout Oregon and Washington, laid off 3,000 people and closed nearly all its locations in early March. This week, the Nines Hotel, a luxury hotel in downtown Portland, notified the city that it would lay off at least 332 employees and temporarily close.

### FEMA announces flood aid for Umatilla, Union and Wallowa counties

PENDLETON — The Federal Emergency Management Agency announced Saturday that Oregon will receive federal assistance for flooding and storms in the northeastern parts of the state earlier this year.

President Donald Trump issued a disaster declaration for the state, making federal funding available for affected people in areas including Umatilla County and the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation.

The federal assistance can include grants for things like temporary housing, home repairs and low-cost loans to cover uninsured property losses.

The funding is also available to state, tribal and affected local governments on a cost-sharing basis for the repair or replacement of facilities damaged by storms in Umatilla, Union and Wallowa counties, FEMA said.

Gov. Kate Brown declared a state of emergency for those counties after severe flooding, snow melt and landslides struck the region in early February. Major flooding closed stretches of Interstate 84, affecting areas from Hermiston to Ontario.

Residents in northeast Umatilla County were urged to evacuate at the peak of the flooding, and many people in the region were displaced from their homes.

*— Meerah Powell, Oregon Public Broadcasting*

### Portland philanthropist and art lover Arlene Schnitzer dies at 91

PORTLAND (AP) — Arlene Schnitzer, a philanthropist who gave away more than $150 million to thousands of civic projects in Portland and helped bring arts in the city to another level, has died. She was 91.

Her son, Jordan Schnitzer, said she died on Saturday after having some intestinal issues.

"In the end, at 91, I think she just decided she'd had a pretty amazing life," Jordan Schnitzer told The Oregonian/OregonLive.

Portland's Arlene Schnitzer Concert Hall is named after her. She and her husband, Harold Schnitzer, who died in 2011 at age 87, helped establish the Center for Northwest Art, and a curatorial and awards program.

"Both my parents were proud Portlanders," Jordan Schnitzer said. "They were born and educated here. It was their village, they used to say. They felt if they didn't help build the institutions in this town, who would?"

Bruce Guenther, former chief curator of the Portland Art Museum, said the Schnitzers transformed philanthropy by making large donations, and urged that other wealthy patrons begin doing so also.

Harold and Arlene Schnitzer donated to a variety of causes. Recipients included New Avenues for Youth, community gathering places such as the Oregon Zoo, schools such as the University of Oregon and Lewis and Clark College, Jewish cultural agencies such as the Mittleman Jewish Community Center, and arts institutions from the Oregon Symphony and Oregon Ballet Theatre to the Portland Opera and Portland Art Museum.

## TUITION

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The college's falling enrollment, increasing Public Employment Retirement System payments and decreasing state support converge into a grim picture of financial pain. The tuition hike will make a tiny dent.

Board member Jane Hill thanked students and faculty for sacrifices, while also acknowledging that the $2 bump was "a little bit like holding a bake sale to solve a $3 million problem."

Starting at $6.1 million in reserves at the end of 2017-18, the college is in danger of falling below the $1.5 million minimum required by the board.

The board stopped short of also raising tuition for the two following years, but declared its intention to do so as a way to allow students and their families to make financial plans.

"The school doesn't want to be in the position of making promises we can't keep," said BMCC Board of Education Chair Heidi Van Kirk. "We won't commit to two future years, but will commit to the intent."

Out-of-state students will see a $3 increase in tuition and international students will pay an extra $6. Current out-of-state tuition costs $162 per credit hour and international tuition is $324. Most BMCC students are in-state, as the college offers in-state tuition to residents of Oregon, California, Idaho, Montana, Nevada and Washington. The college has only one international student.