

Easter Bunny rolls up with sweets, more

By Jayson Jacoby
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Stephanie Waldron Brown had never been the Easter Bunny, but she knew that in the unique year of 2020, simply doling out candy just wouldn't be enough.

And Brown had the perfect complement to chocolate. Toilet paper.

But as Brown, who lives in Baker City, donned for the first time the bunny costume her grandmother, Sandra Duvall of Halfway, gave her last year, she had no expectation that she'd be wearing the oversize outfit for the next few hours.

Brown intended only to walk — well, clomp in a clumsy way — down the street to her neighbors' home.

She had joked recently with them about the toilet paper shortage during the coronavirus pandemic, and Brown figured she'd try to brighten their Easter by delivering candy as well as a few rolls of the coveted tissue.

"The first social distancing Easter Bunny," Brown said with a chuckle during a Monday interview.

But while she was walking to the neighbor's home, Brown was surprised by how many passing drivers honked their horns and waved when they saw the huge hare wearing a bright yellow hat.

So she decided to extend her walk to include parts of Main and Campbell streets. Her goal, she said, was to "spread kindness, not the virus."

"It was so much fun," Brown said. "There was lots of laughing, which is the most important part."

She packed her basket with Hershey's chocolate Hugs candies — "I'm a hugger," she said, a practice she has had to temporarily avoid — and with rolls of toilet paper.

Brown said that over three hours or so she waved to dozens of motorists and distributed 2 bags of candy and about 20 rolls of toilet paper.

Brown said her three children went along. Makaylah, 5, held the bunny's hand and waved, while Daniel, 13, and Savannah, 16, helped their mom avoid tripping over the huge fake feet at curbs.



Submitted photo
Stephanie Waldron Brown made the rounds as the Easter Bunny on Sunday.

Brown visited a few places where she knew kids would be gathering.

Just by coincidence, she happened to walk past a home where a group of children were engaged in an Easter egg hunt.

The youngsters were delighted at their unexpected floppy-eared interloper.

"They were so excited," Brown said.

But her favorite encounter was with a toddler, a girl of maybe 2 or 3, who cried with joy when she saw her favorite bunny.

"She said, 'I love you, Easter bunny,'" Brown said. "It was so sweet."

Brown's first Easter in costume, though spur of the moment, might not be her last.

"I might have to make it a tradition," she said.

ROADS

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The state had allotted more than \$1.2 million to cover half the road construction costs. The other half was to come from local transportation sales tax revenue, which also is down.

"We were hoping to bid it out for construction very soon, but then COVID-19 and all that, so that timeline is kind of in the air," said West Plains Administrator Tom Stehn, a former state highway engineer. "It was a high priority for us."

Though ambulances are running as usual and detours are well-marked for visitors, "obviously that direct interchange would be nice," said Daniel Marshall, chief clinical officer for the South Howell County Ambulance District.

The city of Bend, Oregon, the nation's seventh-fastest growing metropolitan area over the past decade, pulled a \$190 million transportation bond off the May ballot. Supporters had concerns about pushing a property tax hike for roads, sidewalks and bike lanes while local businesses are suffering financially and many residents are without work.

"They're going to show up on voters' day and just glance and think, 'I'm not raising my taxes right now, no way!'" said Mike Riley, co-chairman of the Go Bend 2020 Coalition that supported the measure. "We're going to come back to voters, but now just felt like the wrong time."

Most states have classified road construction as essential work that can continue despite orders shutting down certain businesses. But some states have not.

Washington, site of the first coronavirus outbreak in the U.S., suspended work on 92 of its 100 active highway projects as a result of a stay-at-home order for most workers. The halted projects include major ones in Seattle and Spokane, as well as improvements to an Interstate 90 pass through an avalanche-prone area of the Cascade Mountains.

Vermont's entire \$200 million road construction plan for 2020 is on hold, save for a \$6 million emergency repair where a storm washed out part of the foundation on Interstate 89.

The longer the delay, the greater the likelihood that some projects might not get finished this year.

"Every project is sort of at risk of running out of quality weather days to complete the work," said Jeremy Reed, construction engineer for the state's transportation agency.

Police arrest wrong-way driver on Interstate 84

By Chris Collins
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Oregon State Police arrested a wrong-way driver who traveled east for 11 miles in the westbound freeway lanes Sunday night.

Charles Michael Campbell, 59, of Anchorage, Alaska, was arrested near Pleasant Valley about 9 p.m., Sr. Trooper Levi Macy wrote in his

log report.

Macy stated that according to initial reports, Campbell began his wrong-way journey at Milepost 306, the south Baker City interchange. Macy found Campbell stopped against the freeway barrier facing the wrong way at Milepost 317.

Macy said Campbell smelled

of alcohol when Campbell spoke to him, but the suspect refused to perform a field sobriety test. Macy arrested Campbell and transported him to the Baker County Jail. Campbell provided a voluntary breath sample, which showed a blood alcohol concentration of .16% at 10:27 p.m., Macy wrote. That is twice the legal limit of .08%

Because of restrictions on who will be lodged at the jail to ensure adequate safe distancing of inmates, Campbell was taken to a Baker City motel for the night.

Campbell's vehicle was towed by Blue Mountain Towing.

Sheriff Travis Ash said Campbell did not meet the criteria under the coronavirus pandemic policy he has

put in place at the jail.

Instead, Macy cited Campbell on charges of driving under the influence of intoxicants, reckless driving and failure to obey a one-way designator and given a court date to appear.

Ash noted that because Campbell's car was towed, he no longer posed a threat in the community.

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