

Small-business & Ag HAPPENINGS

EO Media Group

Wallowa County commissioners seek COVID-19 savvy business plans

ENTERPRISE — Wallowa County commissioners are asking local businesses to submit written plans for opening in the world of COVID-19. Gov. Kate Brown has asked businesses to have written plans outlining policies to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 while reopening. These plans should include how a businesses plans to minimize contact with employees, patrons and the community at large.

You can email plans to Commissioner Susan Roberts at sroberts@co.county.or.us or for other arrangements call Roberts at 541-426-4543 ext. 1133.

The Wallowa County commissioners also asked individuals to take responsibility for decisions regarding contact with vulnerable populations, such as our elderly and people with underlying health conditions.

OTEC holds annual meeting virtually

BAKER CITY — Oregon Trail Electric Cooperative announced it will hold its annual meeting Saturday at 10:30 a.m. virtually. The OTEC board president will preside at the meeting and conduct business as necessary. The move to hold the meeting online is due to the coronavirus, according to a press release from the cooperative.

Three positions on the OTEC Board of Directors are up for election. Election results for Position 1 (Union County), Position 2 (Baker County) and Position 3 (Harney County) will be announced during the meeting.

Candidates on the ballot are:

Position 1 – Union County

Candidates: George Galloway (Incumbent) and Cory Miller

Position 2 – Baker County

Candidates: Aletha Bonebrake (Incumbent) and Tamrya Keller

Position 3 – Harney County

Candidates: Robert Cargill (Incumbent) and Laurie Draper

Terms are for three years. Election ballots arrive in the mail starting in May, according to the press release. Ballots come with a secrecy envelope. Place ballots into the secrecy envelope and place that into the prepaid colored envelope. If you are unable to mail your ballot by May 22, drop it off at the secure drop boxes at your local OTEC office no later than May 29 or at OTEC headquarters in Baker City on May 30 before 10:00 a.m.

Members voting by mail will be entered to win a \$500 energy credit. The winner will be announced during the annual meeting. OTEC customers are entitled to vote in the election.

Oregon Trail Electric will provide details on how to view the annual meeting virtually in the coming weeks. Visit otec.coop/annual-meetingboard-elections for updates and more information pertaining to the meeting. If you have questions on the state of the Annual Meeting or any, call the cooperative's communications office at 541-524-2858 or email communications@otecc.com

Benefits now available for self-employed and independent contractors

SALEM — The Oregon Employment Department starting Tuesday began providing unemployment benefits through the federal CARES Act Pandemic Unemployment Assistance program.

According to a press release from the state agency, it has recruited and trained staff to process PUA claims.

Oregonians who are eligible for this program include individuals who do not qualify for or cannot collect benefits on a regular unemployment insurance claim. This includes Oregonians who are self-employed and not subject to unemployment insurance tax, work as an independent contractor and perform work not subject to unemployment insurance tax, such as agricultural workers.

To qualify, you must be unemployed, partially unemployed or unable and unavailable for work due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Federal law provides the PUA benefits are retroactive to the first week a worker was impacted by a qualifying COVID-19 reason, potentially starting the week of Feb. 2 through the week ending Dec. 26. The PUA process can take as little as one week or several weeks, depending on the claim complexity. To apply, access the PUA application and certification forms at <https://govstatus.egov.com/ui-benefits/CARES>. There are three ways to start a new application for PUA benefits:

- Email OED_PUA_INFO@oregon.gov to request a secure email link, then attach your PUA application and weekly claim reports to the secure email. Only use the secure e-mail link to provide personal identifying information relevant to your claim.

- Mail your PUA application and weekly claim reports to Oregon Employment Department at P.O. Box 14165, Salem, OR 97311.

- Fax your PUA application and weekly claim reports to 503-371-2893.



Photo by Phil Wright/EO Media Group

Carla Sorweide takes an order Tuesday at her establishment, Hought's 24 Flavors, in La Grande. Customers can come in to order food and treats to go during the COVID-19 pandemic, Sorweide said, and the takeout business is keeping the ice cream and burger shop busy.

Scooping up success

La Grande ice cream shop remains hot spot by adapting to takeout and curbside orders

By Phil Wright

EO Media Group

LA GRANDE — Business at La Grande's lone ice cream shop is heating up.

"It's been so darn busy," owner Carla Sorweide said. "We're answering the phone more except when we're really busy. And we're doing deliveries."

All moves Hought's 24 Flavors has made to stay afloat during the COVID-19 crisis and meet the mandates to curb the spread of the virus.

Hought's went on hiatus for a while after Gov. Kate Brown issues her executive order on March 23 banning on-site dining and drinking at restaurants and bars. But Sorweide was not about to just close the shop. She said she went to her business Facebook page to let customers know Hought's would reopen and provide curbside takeout and delivery.



Photo by Phil Wright/EO Media Group

Bruce Weimer prepares burgers Tuesday at Hought's 24 Flavors, La Grande. The business has adapted to providing curbside service and deliveries to meet the rules against dining in during the COVID-19 pandemic.

"Finally people started finding out about us," she said. "Word of mouth travels quick in La Grande."

Customers came back and have kept coming.

Before noon Tuesday, two men waited for their orders outside the establishment at 602 Adams Ave. Moments after cook Bruce Weimer finished with their meals, three

more customers entered, ordered burgers and fries and waited in a car outside. Next, a mom and daughter entered with an order.

Sorweide said customers have to keep at least 6 feet apart per social distancing guidelines, and when times get busy, the line stretches well outside the door. Sorweide credited feedback on social media for tips on what works well for changing over to takeout and curbside service. Adapting to new ways of doing business are paying off.

"It's nice. We needed it," Sorweide said. "Right now, it doesn't even feel like there's a virus."

Hought's 24 Flavors celebrated 15 years in business on Valentine's Day. The shop has been a favorite for nearby grade school students, Sor-

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Craft brewers see demand plunge amid virus closures

■SE Oregon, SW Idaho hop growers plan to reduce acreage by as much as 5% to 20%

By Brad Carlson

EO Media Group

SALEM — Craft-beer revenues plunged on COVID-19 concerns, impacting the industry as well as the farmers who supply it with hops and barley.

The Brewers Association in an early April survey of craft brewers found on-site sales had dropped by 65% — eased slightly by new drive-up and delivery sales — and fell by more than 90% in distributed draft as bars and other outlets were closed.

Sales to retailers rose as much as 20% as consumers stocked up.

Bart Watson, the association's chief economist, said the outlook is uncertain "since we don't know what reopening looks like."

"I've seen some analysts suggest that on-premise is going to stay down 50% for many more months even if it partially reopens," he said. "Beyond that, we're all just guessing."

The uncertainty largely reflects the many unknowns, Watson said. Data is lacking about the progression of the coronavirus, the government response and consumer behavior.

"As such, there are a wide variety of possibilities based on the timing and level at which state governments lift

restrictions, how consumers respond to those actions and the situation more broadly, and in turn how those actions then slow or speed the progression of cases," he said.

Idaho Hop Growers Association President Michelle Gooding said growers in Southwestern Idaho and Southeastern Oregon plan to cut back by 5% to 20% from a year ago, depending on varieties grown and diversity of clientele.

Jaki Brophy of Hop Growers of America in Yakima, Washington, said the industry had been planning to increase acreage again this year.

"But with COVID developments unfolding, merchants started working with growers around the end of March to reduce acreage despite plans already in place and contracts already settled earlier," she said. "While it is a tough decision as investments had already been made, on the whole, people understand the big picture and are willing to take some losses now for a more stable market."

Idaho barley acreage is expected to fall 6%, USDA reported March 31. Some is yet to be planted. More

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Photo by Ben Margot/Associated Press

Protestors close down a drive-thru April 21 at a McDonald's restaurant in Oakland, California, over what they say is a lack of personal protective equipment for employees. Across the country, the new, unexpected front-line workers of the pandemic — from grocery store and fast food workers to Uber drivers — are taking action to protect themselves.

Pandemic job actions offer hope for renewed labor movement

By Nicholas Riccardi and Dee-Ann Durbin

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Jordan Flowers never thought he would become a labor leader. Then the coronavirus forced him to risk his life every time he clocked in.

The robotics operator at Amazon's Staten Island warehouse helped lead one of the first walkouts at the site — a protest over the company's lack of protective equipment. A month later, even after Amazon scrambled to provide masks and gloves and check employees' temperatures, workers continue conducting scattered walkouts to protest what they say are still-risky conditions in warehouses where workers have had the virus.

"You risk your life putting in 10 hours every day," said Flowers, 21, who has an

autoimmune disease and is at heightened risk for infection. "You're surrounded, and you don't know who has it or who touched what to pass it on."

Across the country, the unexpected front-line workers of the pandemic — grocery store workers, Instacart shoppers and Uber drivers, among them — are taking action to protect themselves.

Rolling job actions have raced through what's left of the economy, including Pittsburgh sanitation workers who walked off their jobs in the first weeks of lockdown and dozens of fast-food workers in California who left restaurants last week to perform socially distant protests in their cars.

To labor activists and historians, the often-spontaneous job actions echo other moments in the labor

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