

# Local & State

## VACCINE

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That plan's top priorities — Phase 1a — includes four groups (categories within each group are not listed in order of priority for vaccination).

- Group 1: hospitals, urgent care, skilled nursing and memory care facility health care professionals and residents, tribal health programs, EMS providers and other first responders

- Group 2: other long-term care facility residents and congregate care sites including health care professionals and residents, hospice programs, mobile crisis care and related services, secure transport, individuals working in a correctional setting
- Group 3: outpatient settings serving specific high-risk groups, in-home care, day treatment services, non-emergency medical transport

- Group 4: health care professionals in outpatient, public health and early learning centers, death care workers, including mortuaries

Doses of COVID-19 vaccine will be available on Friday, Jan. 8, for residents and staff at Meadowbrook Place, said Julie Daly, community relations director and director of sales and marketing.

Nicole Howerton, administrator at Memory Lane

Homes in Baker City, said that facility should receive vaccine doses within the next two weeks.

According to the OHA, between 300,000 and 400,000 Oregonians are in one of the groups and eligible to receive a vaccine in Phase 1a.

"We want to get through this 1a prioritization as soon as we can," Staten said.

A state committee is meeting regularly, she said, to determine priority groups for future phases, 1b and 1c. According to OHA, these are likely to include critical workers (including teachers and other school employees), people at high risk for severe effects from COVID-19 due to underlying medical conditions, and people 65 and older.

Because the first federally approved vaccine, produced by Pfizer-BioNTech, must be stored at 94 degrees below zero Fahrenheit, the initial doses have been distributed through Saint Alphonsus Health System, which has freezers capable of storing the virus at the hospital in Ontario.

Those doses are then driven to the Baker City hospital.

The Baker County Health Department can't store that vaccine here, Staten said.

The Moderna vaccine, however, does not require such

cold temperatures for storage.

Staten said the Health Department received its first allocation of 100 doses of the Moderna vaccine last week.

As of Tuesday, six Health Department employees had received their first dose.

Both vaccines require two doses. With the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine, the second dose is recommended about 21 days after the first. Staten said some Baker County health care professionals will soon receive their second doses of that vaccine.

The second dose of the Moderna vaccine will be given about 28 days after the first.

Although the health department's role in vaccination has been limited so far, Staten said that will change when the state moves into phase 1b, which will include many more people than in phase 1a.

Staten said the department will set up clinics, likely at multiple locations, to inoculate residents.

"We will be doing quite a few of those," she said. "I wish I knew when. It's going to take some time, but we want to get vaccine in arms."

At the Powder River Correctional Facility, the minimum-security prison that houses about 320 inmates in Baker City, employees

## Vaccines in Baker County

As of Wednesday, Jan. 6, 209 people in Baker County had received the first dose of a COVID-19 vaccine. The daily totals:

- Dec. 18 — 34 doses
- Dec. 19 — 1
- Dec. 20 — 0
- Dec. 21 — 25
- Dec. 22 — 1
- Dec. 23 — 32
- Dec. 24 — 0
- Dec. 25 — 0
- Dec. 26 — 1
- Dec. 27 — 2
- Dec. 28 — 7
- Dec. 29 — 10
- Dec. 30 — 78
- Dec. 31 — 11
- Jan. 1 — 0
- Jan. 2 — 0
- Jan. 3 — 1
- Jan. 4 — 0
- Jan. 5 — 6

have the option of receiving a vaccine at the hospital, said Debi Geddes, the prison's correctional rehabilitation manager/administrative services manager.

The prison, which until Dec. 13 had had no positive cases among inmates, as of Tuesday had 45 inmates and 13 employees test positive.

## TESTING

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Michelle Owen, who is Baker City's public works director, said she decided to be tested although she has no symptoms.

"I feel it's important that, maybe I'm asymptomatic, if there's a chance that I would give it to somebody I would want to know," Owen said.

Owen and Linscott both said they were motivated to get tested for a reason other than finding out whether they're infected.

They also hope to contribute to reducing Baker County's test positivity rate, which is one statistic — the other is the number of COVID-19 cases — that determines the county's risk level and resulting business restrictions.

Nancy Staten, director of the Baker

County Health Department, and Mark Bennett, Baker County commissioner, both said this week that the Dec. 16 clinic, with its positivity rate of 1.5%, helped push the county's overall rate below 10%, making it possible for the county to drop from the extreme-risk level to the high-risk level Jan. 1.

"I think the more negative cases we show, the more we can get back to normal," Linscott said.

Owen agreed. "This is an opportunity for two things — to help our community and bring those numbers down so we can get back to work and do what we need to do to get things opened up," she said.

Staten pointed out that unlike the testing clinics, which are open to everyone, whether or not they have symptoms, most other people in the county who are tested do have symptoms and

are much more likely to be infected.

When the county mainly tests people who have symptoms, its positivity rate will be higher, Staten said, than if testing is more widespread and includes people who have no symptoms.

Results from Wednesday's clinic likely won't have much, if any, effect on the county's positivity rate for the two-week period ending Jan. 9, which will determine the county's risk level for Jan. 15-28. That's because test results will take three to five days.

To register for the Jan. 20 clinic — pre-registration is recommended but not required — go to [www.doineedacovid19test.com](http://www.doineedacovid19test.com)

Free testing clinics are scheduled for Jan. 13 from 2 p.m. to 5 p.m. at the Lions Park in Huntington, and on Jan 27 in Halfway from 2 p.m. to 5 p.m. at a location yet to be determined, Yencopal said.

## LOCAL BRIEFING

### Tim Bailey hired as executive director of Powder Basin Watershed Council

Tim Bailey, who recently retired after a 34-year career with the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW), is the new executive director of the Powder Basin Watershed Council.



Bailey

Bailey replaces Christo Morris, who served as executive director for five years before leaving the position last fall, said Dorothy Mason, board president for the Watershed Council.

"I have enjoyed working with the dedicated group of staff, volunteers and community partners," Morris said.

Bailey has lived and worked in Northeastern Oregon for most of his life. His most recent job was district fish biologist for ODFW in La Grande. He was instrumental in the agency's effort to remove illegally introduced yellow perch from Phillips Reservoir and worked on many other watershed enhancement projects in the Powder River basin.

"I understand the culture of this rural area," Bailey said in a press release. "I know what is important to individuals and communities in the region and have worked to develop and implement win-win solutions to restore watersheds in this context. I care about the people I work with. I strongly believe, based on practical experience, in pursuing watershed restoration in a collaborative manner with the various interests represented within a watershed and in a way that supports the livelihood of its residents."

The Watershed Council plans to have an open house this spring to give residents a chance to meet Bailey, depending on COVID-19 restrictions. He can be reached now at the Council office, 2034 Auburn Ave., Suite B (across Auburn from Crossroads Carnegie Art Center). His phone number is 541-523-7288.

## New At The Library

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### FICTION

- "Hush-hush," Stuart Woods
- "The Invited," Jennifer McMahon
- "Gift of the Maggie," Donna Andrews
- "The Faceless Old Woman Who Secretly Lives in Your Home," Joseph Fink
- "The Better Liar," Tonen Jones

### NONFICTION

- "Red Scarf Girl," Ji-Li Jiang
- "All We Can Save," Ayana Johnson
- "Eleanor," David Michaelis
- "Listen To Me Good," Margaret Smith
- "Trust," Osho

### DVDS

- "Equus: Story of the Horse" (Documentary)
- "A Nice Girl Like You" (Comedy)
- "Piranhas" (Paranza Dei Bambini) (Action)
- "Side Effects" (Drama)
- "Tenet" (Sci Fi)

# Bend's Pearl Harbor survivor overcomes COVID-19

■ Dick Higgins has big plans for 2021, including celebrating his 100th birthday in July, and returning to Hawaii

By Kyle Spurr  
The (Bend) Bulletin

BEND — Dick Higgins, the 99-year-old Pearl Harbor survivor from Bend, told friends and family last month he would beat COVID-19 just like he survived World War II and a childhood in the Dust Bowl.

A month later, doctors confirmed Higgins' success. He has recovered from the deadly virus.

"He's going to chalk it up to being an Oklahoma kid that had to survive the Dust Bowl and Great Depression," said Higgins' granddaughter, Angela Norton, in late December.

Higgins, the oldest living Pearl Harbor survivor in Central Oregon, tested positive for the virus Nov. 23, and quarantined at home, which he shares with Norton and her family. Norton's husband and 6-year-old son also contracted the virus, but are now recovered as well.

Doctors told Norton that elderly people are at a higher risk of severe illness and death from COVID-19, so Higgins is fortunate to beat the virus, especially without

*"He got very lucky for someone his age to be able to have such mild symptoms. He is doing so much better. He definitely has more pep in his step."*

— Angela Norton, talking about her grandfather, Dick Higgins, a 99-year-old Pearl Harbor survivor who contracted COVID-19 in November but had relatively mild symptoms

having to be hospitalized.

"He got very lucky for someone his age to be able to have such mild symptoms," Norton said.

Despite no respiratory issues or hospital stays, it was still a difficult few weeks for Higgins.

He had painful body aches, no appetite and had to visit the emergency room when his leg swelled. He stopped acting like himself and was losing his will to live, his granddaughter said.

"He is doing so much better," she said. "He definitely has more pep in his step."

Higgins will need his renewed energy for an eventful year ahead.

He turns 100 on July 24 and hopes to return to Pearl Harbor for the 80th anniversary of the Dec. 7, 1941, attack by Japan.

During the attack, Higgins was a 20-year-old Navy radio operator who woke to Japanese planes flying over his barracks on Ford Island. He recalls spending the day clearing wreckage from the Navy airfield and salvaging planes.

He was two years into his naval service when the attack occurred. He saw joining the Navy as a way for some stability after growing up in a small Oklahoma town during the Great Depression and the Dust Bowl.

Higgins and his family have made the trip back to Pearl Harbor several times over the years. The family attended the national ceremony in Honolulu for the 60th, 65th, 70th and 75th anniversaries.

Higgins hopes to keep the tradition alive for the 80th anniversary. "He is back to wanting to live to 100 and go to Hawaii next year," Norton said. "That's incredible."

Higgins has one more goal beyond the trip to Hawaii. He wants to be the longest living person in



Contributed Photo

Dick Higgins, a 99-year-old Pearl Harbor survivor from Bend, told friends and family last month he would beat COVID-19 just like he survived World War II and a childhood in the Dust Bowl.

his family.

To accomplish that feat, he has to outlive his late wife's brother-in-

law who was 106.

"His goal has always been to live to 106," Norton said, "at least."

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