

Bend Blockbuster booming after Netflix documentary goes viral

By **KYLE SPURR**

The Bulletin

BEND — The Blockbuster video rental store in Bend already was popular when it became the last location on Earth. It drew visitors from across the United States and as far as Taiwan and London.

But in the past two weeks, the store off Northeast Third Street has been flooded with even more visitors and online orders after Netflix boosted its visibility. It was featured in “The Last Blockbuster,” a documentary about the store that started trending in the top 10 most watched movies on Netflix.

People have sent flowers and called the store just to say thank you for staying open. Those visiting the store wear masks and keep their distance due to the COVID-19 pandemic, but are not deterred from finding a movie to rent.

In the backroom, staff members have been busy packaging thousands of online orders for Blockbuster T-shirts, hats and face masks, which are all made by Bend businesses.

“It’s a little bit crazy, but it’s a very good thing,” said Bend Blockbuster Manager Sandi Harding. “We’ll take a little crazy if it means keeping the store open.”

Harding is the star of the movie, which peaked as high as the No. 4 movie



Dean Guernsey/Bend Bulletin

Milt McConnell of Bend takes a picture of Mark Style of Philadelphia and Ilene Style of Bend in front of the Bend Blockbuster on Monday, March 29, 2021.



Dean Guernsey/Bend Bulletin

Lynne Zuckerman (left) and Carolyn Costa of Redmond shop for movies at the Bend Blockbuster on Monday, March 29, 2021.

in the United States since it appeared March 15 on Netflix.

People have stopped

Harding in the grocery store to take pictures with her and one boy visited the Bend Blockbuster and was

in awe of seeing Harding, she said.

“It’s good for the store. It’s good for the community,” Harding said. “And I can learn to live with my newfound fame as long as it doesn’t mess with what we are doing every day.”

The two Bend filmmakers behind the documentary, Taylor Morden and Zeke Kamm, had no idea if the store would stay open when they started filming in 2017. The movie focuses on Harding’s day-to-day effort to run the store, which became the last in the world when the Blockbuster in Perth, Australia, closed in March

2019.

Morden said he’s heard from people who call Harding a national treasure and say the store must remain open at all costs. He’s pleased to know the film’s attention on Netflix may be what keeps the store open.

“For us to have some small part in helping the store stay open is amazing,” Morden said. “Not a lot of documentaries actually accomplish the goal of their story.”

The Bend Blockbuster has no plans to close. It has a steady lease agreement with the building’s property owner. The owners of the local Blockbuster, Ken and Debbie Tisher, have leased the property since 1992, when it was a Pacific Video store. The store was franchised in 2000 and became a Blockbuster.

In its heyday, Blockbuster had 9,000 stores. The documentary reminds people about those years when Blockbuster was the leader in home entertainment.

Morden said many viewers enjoy the irony of watching the documentary on Netflix, the streaming service credited with changing the way people watch movies at home and leading to the demise of Blockbuster.

The film has also brought viewers to tears,

especially those who have fond memories of working at a Blockbuster in their childhood, Morden said.

“The best part is the people who message us and say they worked at Blockbuster and were crying watching the movie,” Morden said. “It brought back so many great memories.”

Morden and Kamm are still amazed their movie has gone viral on Netflix, staying in the top 10 for two weeks. Kamm said he’s heard from old high school classmates and a childhood crush, who all enjoyed the film.

“It’s affected people emotionally,” Kamm said. “I think it reminded people that we had this thing that was such an important part of our lives. Hopefully it reminds people to appreciate the things they have now.”

Both filmmakers feel connected with the Bend Blockbuster, even though they are done filming their movie. They contact Harding regularly to find out if she needs more DVDs of their movies or movie posters to sell at the store.

“I’m sure I’ll be involved with the folks at the last Blockbuster until they ever close,” Morden said. “There is no way we are not going to be connected.”

President Biden boosts offshore wind energy, wants to power 10 million homes

By **MATTHEW DALY**

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Biden administration is moving to sharply increase offshore wind energy along the East Coast, saying Monday, March 29, it is taking initial steps toward approving a huge wind farm off the New Jersey coast as part of an effort to generate electricity for more than 10 million homes nationwide by 2030.

Meeting the target could mean jobs for more than 44,000 workers and for 33,000 others in related employment, the White House said. The effort also would help avoid 78 million metric tons of carbon dioxide emissions per year, a key step in the administration’s fight to slow global warming.

President Joe Biden “believes we have an enormous opportunity in front of us to not only address the threats of climate change, but use it as a chance to create millions of good-paying, union jobs that will fuel America’s economic recovery,” said White House climate adviser Gina McCarthy. “Nowhere is the scale of that opportunity clearer than for offshore wind.”

The administration’s commitment to the still untapped industry “will create pathways to the middle class for people from all backgrounds and communities,” she added. “We are ready to rock-and-roll.”

The administration said it intends to prepare a formal environmental analysis for the Ocean Wind project off New Jersey. That would move Ocean Wind toward becoming the third commercial-scale offshore wind project in the U.S.

The Interior Department’s Bureau of Ocean



Michael Dwyer/Associated Press, File

Three of Deepwater Wind’s turbines stand in the water off Block Island, Rhode Island, on Aug. 15, 2016. Though this is only one of two operational U.S. offshore wind farms in 2021, members of the wind power industry and clean energy advocates are hoping President Joe Biden’s administration can transform the country into a leader in offshore wind power.

Energy Management said it is targeting offshore wind projects in shallow waters between Long Island and the New Jersey coast. A recent study shows the area can support up to 25,000 development and construction jobs by 2030, Interior said.

The ocean energy bureau said it will push to sell commercial leases in the area in late 2021 or early 2022.

The administration also pledged to invest \$230 million to upgrade U.S. ports and provide up to \$3 billion in loan guarantees for offshore wind projects through the Energy Department’s recently revived clean-energy loan program.

“It is going to be a full-force gale of good-paying, union jobs that lift people up,” said Energy Secretary Jennifer Granholm.

Ocean Wind, 15 miles off the coast of southern New Jersey, is projected to produce about 1,100 megawatts a year, enough to power 500,000 homes, once it becomes operational in 2024.

The Interior Department has previously announced environmental reviews for Vineyard Wind in Massachusetts and South Fork wind farm about 35 miles east of Montauk Point in Long Island, N.Y. Vineyard Wind is expected to produce about 800 megawatts of power and South Fork about 132 megawatts.

Biden has vowed to double offshore wind production by 2030 as part of his effort to slow cli-

mate change. The likely approval of the Atlantic Coast projects — the leading edge of at least 16 offshore wind projects along the East Coast — marks a sharp turnaround from the Trump administration.

As president, Donald Trump frequently derided wind power as an expensive, bird-slaughtering way to make electricity, and his administration resisted or opposed wind projects nationwide.

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State fines Bend coffee shop \$27K for COVID-19 violations

BEND — Oregon Occupational Safety and Health has fined a Bend coffee shop more than \$27,000 for violating three standards meant to protect employees from the coronavirus disease.

State officials said in a news release Tuesday, March 29, that Kevista willfully continued to potentially expose workers to the virus, despite a public health order limiting the capacity of indoor dining to zero.

The citation resulted from an inspection after multiple complaints. The inspection documented the company began allowing indoor dining on Dec. 3 and thereafter. During that time, Deschutes County was designated an “extreme risk” for transmission of the disease.

During the inspection, owners Krista and Kevin Lauinger said they chose to reopen even though they were aware it went

against workplace health requirements, state officials said.

The coffee shop plans to appeal the fine, KTVZ-TV reported.

The fine is three times the minimum penalty for such a violation and the decision reflects the need to ensure a more appropriate deterrent effect where employers insist on disregarding health and safety standards, according to Oregon OSHA Administrator Michael Wood.

Such behavior puts employees at risk and enables the employer to achieve a competitive advantage over businesses that comply with the requirements, officials said.

Last July, OSHA issued an \$8,900 citation to Kevista for failing to implement face coverings in line with guidance for restaurants and bars. Kevista’s appeal of that fine is pending, the agency said.

— Associated Press

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