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| ▲ DOW 30,606.48 +196.92 | ▲ NASDAQ 12,888.28 +18.28 | ▲ S&P 500 3,756.07 +24.03 | ▼ 30-YR T-BOND 1.64% -0.2 | ▲ CRUDE OIL \$48.52 +1.2 | ▲ GOLD \$1,893.10 +2.10 | ▼ SILVER \$26.33 -1.16 | ▼ EURO \$1.2211 -0.0079 |
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BRIEFING

Jobless claims down 19,000

The number of Americans seeking unemployment benefits last week fell by 19,000 to 787,000, still a historically high level as a resurgent coronavirus maintains its grip on the U.S. economy.

While at the lowest level in four weeks, the figures released Thursday by the Labor Department are nearly four times higher than last year at this time before the coronavirus struck. Employers continue to cut jobs as rising infections keep many people at home and state and local governments re-impose tighter restrictions on businesses and public activities.

Jobless claims were running around 225,000 per week before the pandemic struck with force in March when weekly jobless claims surged to 6.9 million and sent U.S. economy into a deep recession.

Amazon gets into podcast business

Amazon is jumping into the podcast business. The online shopping giant is buying Wonderly, a 4-year-old producer of popular true crime podcasts such as "Dr. Death" and "Dirty John," which was later turned into a TV series.

An explosion of new podcasts has led to a number of acquisitions as competing platforms try to grow their audiences and their ad revenue.

The music streaming platform Spotify bought two podcast companies in 2019 and it's added high-profile hosts to its roster, including Prince Harry and Meghan Markle.

Wonderly podcasts will be part of Amazon's music streaming service, but it will still be available on other platforms as well.

Terms of the acquisition were not released.

Utah papers print final daily editions

Salt Lake City's two major newspapers have printed daily editions for more than a century, but now the presses will only be whirring once a week as they join other news organizations nationwide in shifting their focus online to stay afloat.

The Salt Lake Tribune and Deseret News printed their final daily newspapers Thursday as they joined others like the Tampa Bay Times and the Arkansas Democrat-Gazette that made the same decision in response to declining print and circulation revenues that have upended the industry and led to a new era of journalism.

The Tribune, which won the Pulitzer Prize for local reporting in 2017, will publish one print newspaper each week on Sunday. The newspaper had printed daily for 149 years.

The Deseret News will also print one newspaper every weekend and also offer a monthly magazine. The newspaper had printed papers daily throughout its 170-year history.

The newspapers, which will publish daily online, announced they would stop printing daily in October.

— *Bulletin wire reports*

OREGON | TOBACCO TAXES

Smokers will pay \$2 more per pack

BY FEDOR ZARKHIN
The Oregonian

Smokers will pay \$2 more in taxes per pack of cigarettes starting Friday, the day a series of steep voter-approved tobacco taxes go into effect and dramatically change Oregon's nicotine landscape.

State cigarette taxes will more than double, giving Oregon the sixth-highest cigarette taxes in the country at a total of \$3.33.

Electronic cigarettes also will be taxed for the first time in Oregon, and the cap on cigar taxes will double.

Tobacco is by far Oregon's leading cause of preventable deaths, with about 7,800 fatalities in 2018, the latest state data available shows. That's more than the next six leading causes of preventable death combined, including obesity, alcohol use and car crashes.

Research has shown that

high taxes lead to less smoking. Using the results from one recent study of U.S. smoking habits and tax rates, Oregon's smoking rate could drop to about 10%, down from the 15% that state officials logged in 2019.

The average cost of a pack of cigarettes will likely jump to around \$8.33, similar to the current average price in Washington.

See *Cigarettes* / A8



This 2016 file photo shows cigarette prices before California raised its tobacco tax by \$2 per pack in 2016 to \$2.87 per pack.

Maggie Beck/file photo

Pandemic | Food sustainability

Cooped-up Americans opt for backyard chickens



Terry Chea/AP photos

Ron and Allison Abta hold hens in front of their backyard chicken run in Ross, California.

BY TERENCE CHEA • The Associated Press

ROSS, Calif. —

The coronavirus pandemic is coming home to roost in America's backyards. Forced to hunker down at home, more people are setting up coops and raising their own chickens, which provide an earthy hobby, animal companionship and a steady supply of fresh eggs.

Amateur chicken-keeping has been growing in popularity in recent years as people seek environmental sustainability in the food they eat. The pandemic is accelerating those trends, some breeders and poultry groups say, prompting more people to make the leap into poultry parenthood.

Businesses that sell chicks, coops and other supplies say they have seen a surge in demand since the pandemic took hold in March and health officials ordered residents to stay home. Allison and Ron Abta of Northern California's Marin County had for years talked about setting up a backyard coop. They took the plunge in August.

The couple's three kids were thrilled when

"These chickens are like my favorite thing, honestly. They actually have personalities once you get to know them."

— Violet Abta, whose parents set up a chicken coop in August

their parents finally agreed to buy chicks.

"These chickens are like my favorite thing, honestly," said 12-year-old Violet, holding a dark feathered hen in her woodsy backyard. "They actually have personalities once you get to know them."

The baby birds lived inside the family's home for six weeks before moving into the chicken run in the yard.



A heritage hen sits on a wire enclosure at Mill Valley Chickens in Mill Valley, California.

See *Chickens* / A8

Markets end year on record highs

BY DAMIAN J. TROISE AND ALEX VEIGA
The Associated Press

Wall Street closed out a tumultuous year for stocks with more record highs Thursday, a fitting coda to the market's stunning comeback from its historic plunge in the early weeks of the coronavirus pandemic.

The benchmark S&P 500 index finished with a gain of 16.3% for the year, or a total return of about 18%, including dividends.

The Nasdaq composite, powered by high-flying Big Tech stocks, soared 43.6%. The Dow Jones Industrial Average gained 7.2%, with Apple and Microsoft leading the way.

The market's milestone-setting finish follows a mostly upward grind for stocks in recent weeks, fueled by cautious optimism that the U.S. economy and corporate profits will bounce back in 2021 now that the distribution of COVID-19 vaccines is under way.

"We came into the year expecting slow growth and it turned out to be the fastest bear market recovery in history," said Sunitha Thomas, national portfolio advisor at Northern Trust Wealth Management.

The virus pandemic shocked markets early in the year. The S&P 500 fell 8.4% in February, then plunged 12.5% in March as the pandemic essentially froze the global economy. Businesses shut down in the face of the virus threat and tighter government restrictions. People shifted to working, shopping and doing pretty much everything else from home.

The dire economic situation weighed heavily on almost any company that relied on direct consumer spending or a physical presence, including airlines, restaurants, hotels and mall-based retailers.

Volatility spiked. The Dow had several day-to-day swings of about 2,000 points. And the S&P 500 rose or fell by at least 1% on twice as many days in 2020 than it did, on average, since 1950.

The VIX, which measures how much volatility investors expect from the S&P 500, climbed to a record high 82.69 in March and remained above its historical average for much of the year.

The wave of selling accelerated as the economic fallout from the pandemic widened, leaving many long-term investors looking on as their gains after a blockbuster 2019 for stocks evaporated. Five months later, the market recouped all of its losses.

See *Markets* / A8

Girl Scouts call on bakers to address child labor

The Associated Press

The Girl Scouts of the USA said Wednesday that child labor has no place in its iconic cookies and called on the two companies that bake them to act quickly to address any potential abuses linked to the palm oil in their supply chains.

The comments were sent

"Our investment in the development of our world's youth must not be facilitated by the under-development of some."

— Girl Scouts of the USA

in the form of a tweet to Associated Press reporters who released an investigation Tuesday linking Girl Scout cookies and the supply chains of other

well-known food brands to an estimated tens of thousands of children who often work unpaid for long hours in hazardous conditions to help harvest

palm fruits on plantations in Indonesia and Malaysia.

"Child labor has no place in Girl Scout Cookie production," the Girl Scouts tweeted. "Our investment in the development of our world's youth must not be facilitated by the under-development of some."

See *Scouts* / A8