

THE KOBE BRYANT TRAGEDY LAUNCHED A YEAR OF MISERY

A sports columnist reflects one year after the NBA legend's death | **SPORTS PULLOUT, A5-8**

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Restrictions could ease within 3 weeks

BY GARY A. WARNER
Oregon Capital Bureau

Falling COVID-19 infection rates will allow the state to lift some restrictions on businesses and activities over the next three weeks, the state's top health official said Monday.

Oregon Health Authority Director Pat Allen told the Senate Committee on Health Care that the infection rate in Oregon had dropped to 5.1% for the week of Jan. 17, the lowest rate since late October.

The rate has been steadily dropping since the first week of January and has reached a point where growth in the

COVID-19

Vaccines now available for Central Oregon residents 75 and older, **A2**

daily number of cases is expected to stay relatively flat or drop further.

The rate means the state can move more of the state's 36 counties lower on the four-tier risk-level measures. The latest two-week ratings will be released

in the next two days and will show some counties dropping a level, while no county's risk level is on the rise.

"It's the hard work of Oregonians," Allen told the panel.

Allen said Oregon has the fourth-lowest infection rate and the fifth-lowest death rate of the 50 states.

Allen said that if the trend sustains for another two weeks, several more counties will move down the risk level scale, including some with larger populations.

Gov. Kate Brown is also expected to make an announcement this week to allow some gyms and other indoor

recreation to operate again.

The lower rate of infection is good news as the state continues to struggle with obtaining enough of the new Pfizer and Moderna vaccines to ramp up inoculations. The two-shot vaccines are the key to ending the pandemic that has killed 420,000 people nationwide, including 1,882 Oregonians.

"Our real challenge right now is just flat out not having enough vaccine," Allen said. The state has received more than 492,000 doses of the Moderna and Pfizer vaccines that have been approved for use on adults. The vaccines require two shots spaced about a month apart.

Oregon is on pace to get more than 12,000 shots administered per day. Allen said that OHA estimates 3.2 million adults are eligible for vaccination, meaning that the state will need 6.4 million doses of vaccine to finish the job.

Allen said the state had enough centers for inoculation and qualified workers to give the shots. It just didn't have vaccine to put to work.

There is hope that new vaccines from Astra Zeneca, Johnson & Johnson and others will be approved and increase the flow of available doses across the country.

See **Restrictions / A4**

BEND-LA PINE | First day in school

'GLAD' TO BE BACK

A chilly January day couldn't dampen many families' excitement to return to in-person elementary classes for the first time since lockdowns began in March



BY JACKSON HOGAN • The Bulletin

Monday didn't look like a typical first day of school for students at R.E. Jewell Elementary in Bend.

Instead of September sun, there was January snow at 8:15 a.m. Parents made sure their kids were wearing their face masks correctly. The adults had to say goodbye to their children from inside their parked cars or on the sidewalk, as Bend-La Pine School forbade anyone not a student or a staffer to enter the building due to COVID-19 precautions.

Still, the frigid weather didn't stop Richard and Regan Hensley from taking a first-day-of-school picture of their fourth grade daughter, Hailey, in front of Jewell Elementary.

Like many of the parents dropping off their

kids early Monday morning at Jewell, the Hensleys were happy to see their daughter back in school after learning at home for more than 10 months due to COVID-19.

"I'm glad she's going back," Richard Hensley said. "I think it's important for their education and social life."

86.5%

Bend-La-Pine families sending their children back to in-person classes, according to a survey this month

Thousands of Bend-La Pine students in grades K-3 returned to classrooms full time Monday morning for the first time since mid-March. They're the first wave of Bend-La Pine students to go back to classrooms.

Fourth and fifth graders in the district will also return to in-person school this week, but just for a one-day orientation. They'll begin two-day-a-week, hybrid learning on Feb. 1. Middle and high school students are expected to return to hybrid in-person school on Feb. 8.

See **Schools / A13**

PHOTO AT TOP: First grader Vanessa Loza kisses her mom, Maria, before entering R.E. Jewell Elementary School on Monday, the first day of in-person learning in more than 10 months.

ABOVE: Jewell Principal Scott Edmondson greets students. Bend-La Pine's elementary students are the first to return.

Is Redmond ready for pot? Leaders debate

Some fear ceding business to Bend, Madras; others want feds to act first

BY JACKSON HOGAN
The Bulletin

Despite recreational marijuana being legalized statewide, the city of Redmond has never allowed dispensaries within its city limits.

However, three Redmond city councilors want to look into the possibility of approving dispensaries in Redmond. And two of those councilors strongly believe the city is missing out on significant revenue by not allowing dispensaries.

"We can't let money slip out of our hands and move to places to the north and south of us," said city Councilor Clifford Evelyn, who noted that both Bend and Madras allow dispensaries.

See **Pot / A4**

Elder abuse bill in Salem has a Bend connection

BY GARRETT ANDREWS
The Bulletin

A bill proposed this week in the Oregon Legislature would allow mental health counselors to testify against their patients in instances of elder abuse or abuse of a developmentally disabled person.

Senate Bill 176 was inspired by a 2016 case prosecuted in Bend, that of Angela Christine Judd, who pleaded guilty to smothering her 92-year-old grandmother to death with a pillow.

The bill is sponsored by the Oregon Department of Justice.

The state's elder abuse reporting law was mirrored after its child abuse reporting law, but the Judd case exposed an important difference in the language of the two.

See **Legislation / A13**

Grant to boost COCC's manufacturing classes

BY MICHAEL KOHN
The Bulletin

Central Oregon Community College has been awarded a \$320,000 grant from the U.S. Department of Labor to develop its manufacturing skills program, a boost for regional education and training as the economy looks to rebound and add jobs in coming years.

The funds will be issued in stages — \$80,000 a year for the next four years, according to a news release from COCC.

The grant is part of a \$5 million funding request from a consortium of nine Oregon community colleges and the Higher Education Coordinating Commission.

See **COCC / A4**

