

The Bulletin

EMPOWERING OUR COMMUNITY bendbulletin.com

SPORTS PULLOUT, A5-8

BI-MART
Pantry staples, big deals

SAVE \$2
7.99
Superior Nut Company Whole Cashews or Mixed Nuts
17-24 oz

Check out the online savings guide at bimart.com

Deschutes fairgrounds hangs on through pandemic losses

The grounds of the Deschutes County Fair & Expo Center are quiet Monday. Officials hope for more events this year but plan for any contingency.



BY BRENN A VISSER

The Bulletin
Like every other government entity or business in 2021, the Deschutes County Fair & Expo Center is trying to predict the future.

After surviving a year of event cancellations or postponements due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the expo center is trying to move forward, hoping for a world that returns to some sense of normalcy, but preparing for the worst in case it doesn't, said Geoff Hinds, director of the Deschutes County Fair & Expo Center.

"I think the future looks good, assuming we can get back to a level of normalcy," Hinds said Friday. "We understand it's going to be a long process."

The fund that finances the fairgrounds was one of the hardest hit within De-

schutes County government, losing roughly \$700,000 — or 30% of its entire budget — just between March and July of last year due to pandemic-related cancellations, Hinds said. The loss of revenue prompted the county to reassign several fair workers to other departments within the county, as well as some temporary salary reductions and furloughs, he said.

The annual county fair was also, for the most part, canceled, except for the livestock auction.

Deschutes County is not alone. All fairs across the state have taken a financial hit, said Casey Daly, the Crook County Fairgrounds manager and president of the Oregon Fair Association. Only three or four fairs were able to operate last year, which included Crook County, he said.

"We're all struggling based on the guidelines the governor's got out right

now," Daly said.

Some fairs are financially doing better than others, Daly said. Those doing better are in lower-risk counties or those that have been able to be creative and hold more events outdoors, where restrictions are more forgiving, he said. Many, including Crook County, have held drive-thru events, for example.

While the Deschutes County Fair & Expo Center took a financial hit, the impacts were muted thanks to some revenue being generated from some events that were able to take place later in the year, Hinds said. Being able to provide public services like hosting trials for the circuit court, being an evacuation facility for the summer's fires and now as a COVID-19 testing and vaccination site, also has helped keep the expo center stable.

See **Fairgrounds** / A4

DESCHUTES COUNTY

Housing permits surged in 2020

BY MICHAEL KOHN

The Bulletin
New housing unit permits were up nearly 19% in Deschutes County in 2020 compared to the previous year, indicating that more homes are coming on the market, even as prices continue to soar and inventory remains at historic lows.

In Deschutes County, there were 2,403 new housing units that were permitted for construction last year, 375 more than in 2019, according to data from the U.S. Census. These include 464 units inside apartment buildings and 1,792 single-family homes.

That makes 2020 the year with the most permits issued since 2006.

In 2019 there were 2,028 units permitted in the county. These include 458 units inside apartment buildings and 1,488 single-family homes. In 2018, there were 1,982 total units permitted.

See **Permits** / A4

Sisters puts bond on the ballot for new school

Proposal to replace elementary school won't raise area property taxes

BY JACKSON HOGAN

The Bulletin
Sisters Elementary School has run out of room.

The school will need portable classrooms next year to accommodate student growth. It's so small that fifth graders, who are traditionally the oldest students in an elementary, have attended Sisters Middle School for more than a decade. And when small groups of students are taken outside the classroom for instruction, there's no common rooms or small classes for them.

They're taught on the stage, in the hallway or even inside a closet.

See **Bond** / A4

"We lived through it this year, and we'll still be in existence. We'll still be able to pay the bills. But it certainly doesn't happen without challenges."

— Geoff Hinds, director of the Deschutes County Fair & Expo Center, shown Tuesday at right in the entryway of the complex

Dean Guernsey/Bulletin photos



Residents urged to take down bird feeders due to salmonella

BY KYLE SPURR

The Bulletin
Wildlife officials are worried about a salmonella outbreak among songbirds in Central Oregon that is linked to bird feeders, where birds are congregating and consuming contaminated food and water.

Residents are being asked to take

down their bird feeders for the next month to stop the spread of salmonella, a potentially deadly bacterial infection that is common among seed-eating birds in the winter.

Sally Compton, executive director of Think Wild, a wildlife rehabilitation facility in Bend, said having bird feeders in the winter is a

double-edged sword. The feeders help supplement the food supply for birds through the cold weather, but then many birds gather at the feeders and leave feces infected with salmonella. The feces can end up in the water and food, spreading the infection.

"That's where we start to see the

potential to have an outbreak like we have right now," Compton said.

The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife warned the public in December about finding dead birds due to salmonella and other bacteria and viruses. At that time, residents in Sisters reported finding several sick and dead birds.

Reports went down until recently when Think Wild received an uptick in calls over the past two weeks related to salmonella infections in finches and pine siskins. One man recently brought in five dead birds he found around his bird feeder, Compton said.

See **Salmonella** / A13

TODAY'S WEATHER



Clouds and sun
High 41, Low 23
Page A12

INDEX

Business	A11-12	Dear Abby	A7	Local/State	A2-3	Obituaries	A4
Classifieds	A13-14	Editorial	A8	Lottery	A6	Puzzles	A10
Comics	A9-10	Horoscope	A7	Nation/World	A4, 13	Sports	A5-7

The Bulletin
An Independent Newspaper

Vol. 119, No. 41, 14 pages, 1 section



0882671402329 1