

Marijuana

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"I have no motivation to take it any farther," DeBone said Friday.

DeBone said the original vision for the term youth activity center was to keep marijuana operations away from staffed children centers like a Boys & Girls Club, and added that he thought the term youth activity center was not being used as intended by another commissioner, though he did not say specifically who.

Chang, who also supported not appealing the decision, said he thought it was pretty clear that the county

would not prevail if the cases we pursued one step further.

"It's not prudent to waste time, staff and money when you are fairly certain something's not going to go your way," Chang said.

With the youth activity center debate settled, and Deschutes County residents voting to not allow future marijuana growers and producers in the county in November, Chang said he hopes the county can start a chapter and build a good working relationship with marijuana producers.

Adair said she was glad the county pursued the appeals but ultimately

realized the fight was lost.

"It didn't make sense to do it," she said of an appeal to the state supreme court.

David Rosen — the CEO of Waveseer of Oregon, a company that seeks to build a 36,000-square-foot facility east of Bend to grow and process marijuana — was one of the two applications caught up in the litigation.

Rosen said Friday he was happy to hear the commission had a change of heart, and hopes to break ground on his facility this year.

"We're very happy to not have a legal battle on our hands," Rosen said.

Tommy Nehmzow, who wants to build a 1,800-square-foot indoor marijuana facility, will also be allowed to move forward.

Michael Hughes, the attorney representing Nehmzow, said he was not surprised by the commission's decision, mostly because of the recent change in leadership with the election of Chang, a Democrat.

"It took a lot of time and a lot of battle to get where we are at, but I'm glad my client has the ability to do what he was originally approved to do," Hughes said Friday.

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123RF

After roughly two years of legal battles, two marijuana producers can move forward and establish their businesses in rural Deschutes County.



Ryan Brennecke/The Bulletin

Kerry Gillette, a physician assistant with Mosaic Medical, fills syringes Friday with the Moderna vaccine during a COVID-19 vaccination clinic at Bethlehem Inn in Bend.

Vaccinations

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Those numbers were expected to get a boost on Friday when the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs hosted a vaccination clinic with 510 doses available. The clinic was available to anyone over 18 years old, said Pitt.

Pitt said he has already received his second dose of the COVID-19 vaccine.

"There was some hesitancy with the first shot, but then, people kept dying off around here and around the nation," said Pitt. "So I thought I had better get my shot."

At the Bethlehem Inn homeless shelter in Bend, Executive Director Gwenn Wysling was grateful to the Mosaic Medical staff for bringing the vaccine to the shelter for residents and workers and other organizations in the community could convene.

"This is keeping residents safe and healthy," Wysling said. "We have to house less residents than we can keep people healthy. It's been hard because we want to help as many people as possible."

About 140 vaccinations were issued on Friday. The goal is to keep these congregant living facilities healthy, and Mosaic's mission is to provide health care to shelter residents, said Elaine Knobbs-Seasholtz, Mosaic Medical director of strategy and development.

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— Elaine Knobbs-Seasholtz, Mosaic Medical director of strategy and development

that we haven't seen much COVID-19 in these facilities," Knobbs-Seasholtz said. "It makes sense to go where the population is. We want to make sure that the people will get their second doses."

The two vaccines approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration require two doses, about a month apart, to provide complete protection against the virus. The vaccine is fully effective about two weeks after the second dose.

Last week's bad weather meant that the VA Portland office needed to find an alternative way to getting the vaccines to Central Oregon in a timely fashion.

On Friday, a plane arrived and doses were administered at the VA's Bend clinic, said Daniel Herrigstad, VA public information officer.

"We've been using the Pfizer vaccine; there have been challenges because of the drive," Herrigstad said. "It's a question of equity, and it's challenging for rural veterans to get to a clinic. We're making plans to expand our clinics."

The clinic on Friday was open to veterans age 75 and

older, he said. Spouses are not eligible at this time, and neither are those not registered by the VA, Herrigstad said. To register for the vaccine go to www.portland.va.gov.

Deschutes, Jefferson and Crook counties will change the way they sign up eligible people for COVID-19 vaccinations. Starting Friday, the county will announce how many vaccines it will receive and on Saturdays, anyone in that eligible group can sign up for an appointment at the Deschutes County Fair & Expo Center, said Morgan Emerson, Deschutes County Health Services spokeswoman.

Appointments will close when all the spots are taken, she said. Anyone interested should fill out the online vaccine interest form at vaccines.deschutes.org. Additional information is available in Spanish at the El Condado de Deschutes Facebook page.

The county does not have a waiting list for anyone willing to fill in a vacant appointment, she said.

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Biden defends virus progress as weather delays 6M shots

BY ZEKE MILLER AND RICARDO ALONSO-ZALDIVAR

The Associated Press

PORTAGE, Mich. — President Joe Biden toured a state-of-the-art coronavirus vaccine plant Friday, intent on showcasing progress even as extreme winter weather across the U.S. handed his vaccination campaign its first major setback, delaying shipment of about 6 million doses and causing temporary closures of inoculation sites in many communities.

While acknowledging the weather is "slowing up the distribution," Biden said at the Pfizer plant in Michigan that he believes "we'll be approaching normalcy by the end of this year." His speech melded a recitation of his administration's accomplishments in its first month confronting the pandemic, a vigorous pitch for his \$1.9 trillion COVID relief bill and criticism of his predecessor.

The disruptions caused by frigid temperatures, snow and ice have left the White House and states scrambling to make up lost ground as three days' worth of vaccine shipments were temporarily delayed. Even the president's



Evan Vucci/AP

President Joe Biden tours a Pfizer manufacturing site Friday in Portage, Michigan.

trip to see Pfizer's largest plant was pushed back a day due to a storm affecting the nation's capital.

Before the trip, White House coronavirus response adviser Andy Slavitt said the federal government, states and local vaccinators are going to have to redouble efforts to catch up after the interruptions. The setback comes just as the vaccination campaign seemed to be on the verge of hitting its stride. All the backlogged doses should be delivered in the next several days, Slavitt said, still confident that the pace of vaccinations will recover.

Biden has set a goal of ad-

ministering 100 million shots in his administration's first 100 days, and he said Friday that's still on track and it's only a beginning.

He went on to say that by the end of July, his administration can deliver 600 million doses for Americans. Still, Biden cautioned that timetable could change, citing the current weather delays and concerns about new strains of the virus.

"I believe we'll be approaching normalcy by the end of this year," he said. "God willing, this Christmas will be different than last, but I can't make that commitment to you."

Crook County

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"It was the perfect opportunity."

Although student enrollment dipped in school districts locally and statewide this school year, the Crook County School District has bucked that trend. Enrollment has grown by 42 students compared to last winter, to an enrollment of 3,121, according to the district.

There are many possible reasons for this growth. Crook County School District offers a variety of options for families, including a district-run homeschool program. School staff, despite safety concerns, still collaborated with district administrators and returned to classrooms.

But perhaps the biggest reason is that Crook County students in-person as early as September, long before any other district in the region. That's appealing to parents like Peniche.

"It's 100 times better than that ridiculous online stuff," she said.

The district was unable to calculate how many new families enrolled in the Crook County School District this school year, said district spokesperson Jason Carr.

Superintendent Sara Johnson credits Crook County's emphasis on offering multiple choices — or a "customer service direction," as she put it — for retaining and recruiting students.

"From the beginning of this challenge, we started figuring out what our community wanted, then tried to offer options that would meet that," she said.

On top of common options like fully in-person school, part-time in-person, or the entirely remote Crook County Schools On-Line, the district offers a unique program: Grizzly Mountain HomeLink, which is similar to homeschool.

Families who choose Grizzly Mountain are given a up



Dean Guernsey/The Bulletin

Gina Peniche and her sons, first grader Anthony Hernandez and Leo Hernandez, 1, spend time at Barnes Butte Elementary School in Prineville.

to \$1,000 when they start to purchase homeschool curriculum, said Jonny Oelkers, the program's director. Crook County also has a staff of eight teachers and three instructional assistants to assist families when needed, and frequent in-person P.E. and science lab classes are available, he said.

Grizzly Mountain, which launched in September, was intended to retain Crook County families who would otherwise bail for homeschooling or online charters, Oelkers said. And he believes the program, which has enrolled 225 students, has accomplished that mission.

"When everybody was trying to get out of school districts and get into charters, we were starting the equivalent of a charter," Oelkers said. "But it's not a charter."

The Rodgers family — a Prineville family of three who had homeschooled for two years before September — switched to Crook County last fall explicitly because of Grizzly Mountain, said patriarch Rory Rodgers.

He's been pleased with the program so far, and finds district staff to be supportive, he said.

"It's a super-friendly, welcoming staff that appears to really like this job and working with the parents," Rodgers said. "They've really got their stuff together."

The willingness of Crook County school staff to work in-person, despite worries over COVID-19, was also cited as a major factor for retaining enrollment.

Macy Hagensee — president of the Crook County Education Association and the culinary arts instructor at Crook County High School — said the school district quickly put lots of pressure on teachers to reopen classes. And Prineville's political climate added to that, he said.

"We're already, because of the conservative nature of our community, seen as villains against the well-being of kids," said Hagensee.

Although many teachers were concerned about safety, the school district assuaged their concerns by giving the union a seat at the table when shaping reopening plans, Hagensee said. The healthy union/district relationship, and braveness of teachers, helped Crook County schools reopen quickly and safely, which in turn, likely convinced families to not jump ship, he said.

"Most of the things that we really pressed the school district on about safety were addressed," Hagensee said. "As long as nobody dies between now and everybody getting their (vaccines), I'd say the district deserves an A+."

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