



Bulletin file

Volunteer Bob Slater, of Bend, hands a Below Grade beer to Brooks Richardson, with wife, Janine, in one of the beer tents at Bend Brewfest at the Les Schwab Amphitheater in 2013.

## Events

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“More people getting a shot in the arm is the most important shot in the arm that the event industry can receive.”

The loss of the festivals and markets is difficult to quantify as revenue is rarely counted as a whole at each event. But the events have other impacts too. They draw in visitors from other towns to spend money. They also improve the quality of life for those who choose to live here.

Roger Lee, chief executive of Economic Development of Central Oregon, a nonprofit, said markets and festivals also give local craftspeople, farmers and entrepreneurs the opportunity to introduce their products and get customer feedback.

“I remember buying my first Hydroflask at a booth in a local fair,” said Lee. “They clearly got some traction. Holm Made Toffee is also an example of a small business that got its start in local outdoor markets.”

Most events remain in a holding pattern as state and local authorities ponder giving the go-ahead for events.

“Everyone is just waiting to see what happens with the COVID situation, and what the governor’s orders and restrictions are,” said Mindy Aisling, executive director of the Downtown Bend Business Association.

While Bend isn’t quite ready for glitter parties and hoopla, there is some easing back toward normalcy with farmers

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— Marney Smith, director of Les Schwab Amphitheater

markets on the horizon in downtown Bend and North-West Crossing.

Farmers markets are considered an “essential service” and can therefore operate under COVID restrictions. Marielle Slater, president of the Bend Farmers Market board, said the farmers market in Bend last year was well-attended as local residents sought produce amid food shortages nationwide.

“Local food provides a safety net for residents,” said Slater. “In times of crisis like the pandemic and fires, people are realizing how important local food is.”

The first downtown farmers market in Bend this year is planned for May 5 with around 30 vendors expected to attend. A weekly farmers market (Tuesdays) at Centennial Park in Redmond is slated to start June 8. A Saturday farmers market in Madras at Sahalee Park will begin May 29.

In Bend’s Old Mill District, fairs are crossed fingers that outdoor concerts can resume by mid-August.

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Amphitheater. “My expectation is that gatherings of that nature will be safe by mid-July.”

That would be welcome news for hotels and restaurants in Bend. A 2015 economic impact survey conducted by RRC Associates LLC reports that total direct economic activity associated with a summer concert series and Bend Brewfest to be \$27.2 million over 18 days — dollars spent throughout the community on hotels, meals, transportation and entertainment.

Dave Matthews Band and Primus are two acts scheduled to arrive in Bend in late summer if the pandemic allows.

Outdoor events in Sisters this summer are still up in the air and will move forward based on guidance from Gov. Kate Brown, said Turi Shergold, marketing coordinator at the Sisters area Chamber of Commerce.

Big events including the Sisters Rodeo (June 9-13), the Sisters Quilt Show (July 10), and the Harvest Festival (Oct. 9) are all planned but not confirmed. Still, even without the big events, Sisters has proven resilient during the pandemic, said Shergold.

The events are “a great draw for Sisters, but the businesses

are maybe changing their business plans or finding other ways to keep going. People have had to adjust for sure,” said Shergold. “Having said that, we are steady on the lodging. People are coming here.”

Damon Runberg, Oregon Employment Department regional economist, said these events don’t necessarily have a large impact on this area’s economy, but they do impact the quality of life and are a reason to draw and retain talent. He described the quality of life in Central Oregon as a “second paycheck.”

“Many of us are willing to forego a smaller payroll paycheck if we get back a sufficiently large second paycheck from the quality of life,” said Runberg. “The second paycheck is the primary driver of our in-migration. These events and festivals are big second paycheck contributors.”

Other events that are undecided but still possible include:

- The Bend First Friday Art Walk. A meeting on whether or not to greenlight this event will be held in early April.
- The Bend Pet Parade held on July 4 is expected to go ahead, but the fair usually held after the parade in Drake Park is canceled.

- Sunriver is planning to host its annual Sunriver Art Fair (Aug 13-15).
- Redmond Street Festival (June 26-27) and Redmond First Fridays are both tentatively scheduled.

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## IDAHO

# As lawmakers debate banning masks, 4th legislator gets virus

BY KEITH RIDLER

The Associated Press

BOISE, Idaho — A fourth lawmaker in the Idaho House of Representatives has tested positive for COVID-19 in less than a week’s time and just as the Legislature is debating a bill that would ban local governments from requiring that people wear masks.

The increasing number of lawmakers out sick with the coronavirus has legislative leaders in the conservative state worried they may not be able to finish business in a timely fashion.

“Of course I’m concerned,” Republican House Speaker Scott Bedke said Wednesday, before the announcement of the fourth COVID-19 diagnosis among his colleagues.

Bedke wasn’t wearing a face-covering but put one on before getting in an elevator in the Statehouse. “We’re

reemphasizing the safety protocols. We also want to be done by the end of the month. I guess we’ll just see how it goes,” he said.

A major goal of GOP lawmakers in the Legislature this session has been curbing the emergency powers of the Republican governor to respond to things like pandemics. Legislators have floated several proposals that would restrict Gov. Brad Little’s ability to make sweeping directives in the future.

Republican Rep. Julie Yamamoto said Thursday she tested positive Wednesday afternoon and immediately left the Statehouse. She had been on the House floor earlier in the day without a mask as lawmakers debated a huge tax-cut bill.

All four lawmakers out with the illness are Republicans who rarely or never wear masks.

## Stimulus provides \$1.1B for Oregon schools

BY EDER CAMPUZANO

The Oregonian

Oregon’s public schools are in line to receive another \$1.1 billion in federal relief as part of the \$1.9 trillion federal stimulus package President Joe Biden signed earlier this month.

Portland Public Schools, the state’s largest district, will get \$70 million.

Districts won’t immediately have access to those

funds, which state officials say they anticipate will be used largely on school expenses to facilitate a return to in-person instruction. That could include offering summer school, emotional wellness services and classroom air quality upgrades.

The billion-plus outlay is the third and largest such infusion Oregon’s public schools have received since the start of the pandemic.

## Wirkkala

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Instead, if found guilty of murder, he faces life in prison.

The venue should be familiar to many in Deschutes County, the North Sister Expo Center at the Deschutes County fairgrounds. But on Thursday, because of the pandemic, it had been heavily altered to accommodate a socially distanced jury trial. Judge Randy Miller’s bench is located on a standstall at one end of the large hall with the jurors spread out on one side. At several points during jury selection, lawyers paused speaking while planes associated with the nearby Redmond Airport passed overhead.

Potential jurors were polled about firearms, self-defense, drinking and sexual assault.

Wirkkala is represented by Joel Wirtz and Thad Betz. Wirtz is co-manager of the county’s largest public defense firm, Deschutes Defenders. Betz has represented high-profile defendants in Oregon, including Springfield school shooter Kip Kinkel, “Redmond Five” member Justin Link and Edwin Lara, killer of Central Oregon Community College student Kaylee Anne Sawyer.

The defense has identified 30 potential witnesses, including experts on bullet trajectory, crime scene analysis and the effects of sexual assault on victim behavior, as well as sev-

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eral people who will testify to Wirkkala’s “peaceful” nature, according to court documents. The state has listed 52 potential witnesses, including 20 who testified in the first trial.

Police arrived at Wirkkala’s home late Feb. 3, 2013, to find Ryder dead from a shotgun blast to the throat and Wirkkala weeping on the ground nearby.

The two were friends, though not good friends, having only hung out a handful of times. They’d met up earlier that day at the Hideaway Tavern to watch the Super Bowl between San Francisco and Baltimore, then opted for a nightcap at Wirkkala’s home on Will Scarlet Lane. They stopped to buy beer on the way.

They socialized around the kitchen island until Wirkkala’s girlfriend went to bed around 10:30 p.m., leaving the two men to continue drinking and talking.

But what took place next is known only to them, said prosecutor Jayme Kimberly in her opening statement to the jury.

“The only two people who know exactly what happened are the defendant and David Ryder,” Kimberly said.

Wirkkala says he passed out and awoke to Ryder forcing his penis into Wirkkala’s mouth. His defense will present DNA and other evidence to help prove this.

Kimberly is joined at the prosecutor’s table by Kristen Hoffmeyer, also of the Oregon Department of Justice. The case was transferred to the DOJ after the appellate decision at the request of the Deschutes County District Attorney’s office, the cited reasons including a bar complaint Wirkkala filed against the prosecutors in his first trial. Additionally, a distant cousin of Wirkkala’s repeatedly sent poems describing sexual violence against a female prosecutor to media and parties involved in the case.

In the lead-up to the trial, Wirkkala’s closer relatives started a Facebook page, Free Luke Wirkkala, and traveled to demonstrate outside the De-

schutes County Courthouse.

One supporter is his now ex-wife, Rachel Rasmussen, who was his girlfriend at the time and was in the house at the time of the shooting. She was called as the state’s first witness Thursday afternoon. Her panicked 911 call from Feb. 3, 2013, was played for the court.

“That was really hard to listen to,” said Rasmussen, now 40 and a mental health counselor in Washington.

The couple’s divorce was finalized in 2020, though Rasmussen told jurors she still supports her ex-husband’s case.

“I believe that he was sexually assaulted that night and I thank him for protecting our family,” she said.

Trial is scheduled to last four weeks. Proceedings continue Friday with more testimony from Rasmussen and more witnesses for the state.

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