



Submitted photo

The Bowen family, who run the Green Drive Mercantile in Culver, plan to join the Farm-to-Table market in Madras this summer. The family includes Devon and Cheri and their three boys, Tyson, Blake and Colt.

## Madras

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The City Hall plaza is visible from U.S. Highway 97, which becomes Fourth Street in the city.

“We think it’s just a perfect time, day of the week, and location for us to catch passers through and provide a central location for our citizens,” Vattimo said.

Cheri Bowen, who runs a 5-acre farm in Culver with her husband, Devon, said she plans to attend the market and sell similar goods that are in her family’s farm store, Green Drive Mercantile.

Bowen said the market will help connect her farm with people who want to support local businesses. Her farm produces beef, pork, eggs and several vegetables.

“It seems like a lot of people are choosing local more than

ever, which is nice because they realize they can get a lot of products they would normally get from the stores right here,” Bowen said.

Bowen, who works as a potato seed harvest inspector for Oregon State University, said the market will also give her farm more visibility and hopefully draw in visitors to the area.

“If there are travelers, it could be something nice from them to stop and learn a little bit about our community and what we do out here,” Bowen said.

Neighboring farms and ranches have told Bowen they are interested in the market. She hopes most are able to join the market this season.

“The more people hear about it and learn about it, I think it will spark more interest,” Bowen said. “A lot of times the hardest part is finding time away from the farm

or ranch.”

In addition to providing a space for the market, the city of Madras will offer assistance to farmers and ranchers to advertise their products.

Vattimo said she found many farmers and ranchers do not know how to market their products, so she will help them share photos on the market’s social media pages and reach a wider audience.

“We are going to cross pollinate with them and go out and take photos and help them learn how to market their products,” Vattimo said.

Another aspect to the market will be an internship program with the Future Farmers of America, through the 509J School District in Madras. The city will fund the internship and the FFA students will receive school credit. The students will assist vendors at the market and learn how to sell

farm-to-table products, Vattimo said.

The long-term goal for the market is to transition into a permanent storefront in the downtown area that is run and managed by the farmers and ranchers.

“The store would not only provide a sustainable location for selling products, but an opportunity to train young people in entrepreneurship,” Vattimo said.

Vattimo also envisions partnering with local food pantries and using the market to address hunger in the region. Once the market opens this season, the possibilities are endless, she said.

“I feel like this is cracking open the seed of hope and now we are going to see what grows,” Vattimo said. “You just don’t know until you try.”

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## Vaccines

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Brown said Friday that front-line workers and people with underlying health conditions are eligible to get vaccinated April 5. That is two weeks earlier than Brown announced last week when she moved the original May 1 date to April 19.

Brown said discussions with the Biden administration had given her confidence on its ability to deliver on its promise of a major increase in vaccine supply.

Eligibility does not mean availability. The state has fully vaccinated about 570,000 people since December. Estimates put the number of people aged 16 and over who can be inoculated at 3.5 million.

In Deschutes County, about 81% of residents 65 and older have been vaccinated with at least their first shot.

Oregon Health Authority officials told Brown that counties across the state had made enough progress on vaccinating people aged 65 and over to move onto new groups.

There are now 22 counties that have begun vaccinating Oregonians in Phase 1B, Group 6. It includes people aged 50 and over with underlying medical conditions that could lead to a severe illness or death from contracting COVID-19. The long list of groups also includes pregnant women aged 16 and above, seasonal and migrant workers, the homeless and others.

“With so many counties across Oregon ready to begin the next phases of vaccination, I am accelerating our vaccination timelines statewide rather than proceeding county-by-county,” Brown said.

Under Brown’s directive on Friday, vaccination will be available beginning Monday for Phase 1B, Group 7.

Under a federal directive from the Department of Health and Human Services, Oregon and other states must scrap any eligibility limits for those aged 16 and over no later than May 1. The date was chosen by President Joe Biden

and announced during his national address on March 11.

Oregon had planned a phased roll-out of vaccine that would not have allowed unrestricted eligibility until July 1. But the federal edict changed the timeline and compressed the period that vaccine could be targeted to specific groups to just 51 days between Biden’s March 11 announcement and the directive going into effect May 1.

OHA Director Pat Allen said during a press call Friday that if all goes well, Oregon will consider moving the unrestricted eligibility for those aged 16 and over to April 26 — five days before the May 1 date.

The advanced timeline would not be statewide. Counties that submit a letter to the Oregon Health Authority by April 15 stating they are ready to handle the additional demand will be told by April 22 if they can lift all restrictions on April 26.

While mass vaccination centers will continue to be operated by county and state health authorities, Allen said federal supplies will increasingly go to pharmacies that are easier for most residents to visit.

Allen said Oregon should have enough vaccine by June to be able to vaccinate everyone who wants a shot.

As the percentages rise, OHA is increasingly concerned with the number of people who are not seeking inoculation or are actively opposed to it.

In some parts of southwestern Oregon, Allen said less than 50% of seniors were indicating they wanted to be vaccinated. Some of those counties are among those with the highest infection rates as the rest of the state’s caseload drops.

If the state continues on its trend of lowering the infection rate and case totals statewide, more steps can be taken toward allowing ever larger events, said Dr. Dean Sidelinger, the state’s top infectious disease expert.

Large outdoor events such as the Olympic Trials in Eu-

gene in June and the Pendleton Round-Up in mid-September could be held with masking and hygiene safeguards.

Sidelinger said the state hoped to send out guidance for major summer events by next month.

“We’re in a much better place” coming into the summer event season than last year, Sidelinger said.

An increase in infection rates or an outbreak of one of the new more contagious variants of the virus that are circulating in the nation could undercut progress.

The OHA team underscored that the best way to ensure that popular events and places can once again be safely enjoyed was to get vaccinated as soon as possible.

Brown promised that the state will work to ensure that vaccine access for underrepresented communities.

“As we vaccinate our front-line workers and all Oregonians with underlying health conditions, we will work to make sure vaccines reach the communities that have been hardest hit by COVID-19: Oregon’s Black, Indigenous, Latino, Latina, Latinx, Pacific Islander, Tribal and communities of color,” Brown said.

Currently, most people are inoculated with two shots of either Moderna or Pfizer vaccine given a month apart. A third vaccine, a single-shot dose by Johnson & Johnson was recently approved.

Allen testified Wednesday that the state was receiving reports of manufacturing and delivery delays on the Johnson & Johnson doses. He told the House COVID-19 subcommittee that the new one-shot vaccine was a key part of reaching state and federal goals for inoculations.

Allen earlier this week signed an order activating Oregon’s use of a federal law that allows for a vast expansion of who can give vaccinations. There are now 30 different professional and student groups approved to inject people with vaccine. The law protects them from liability

with the exception of “gross negligence.”

Brown said mobile health units and pop-up vaccine centers would increase the state’s ability to get shots into arms in more areas.

“Increased supplies, expanding eligibility will allow health care providers and community-based organizations to be more efficient in their efforts to vaccinate hard-to-reach communities,” she said.

Brown’s new directives came as the state reported a slight upswing in infection rates after a long decline since the peak levels around the end of last year.

The United States passed another milestone this week, with over 30 million cases since February 2020, resulting in 546,915.

Worldwide, there have been just under 125.7 million infections and over 2.75 million deaths

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## Guns

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At the moment, Bend-La Pine Schools does not allow students, staff or volunteers to bring concealed guns onto school property or to school-sponsored events.

However — in accordance with state law — other people, like visitors or parents, can bring concealed weapons into schools if they are permitted to do so, said Julianne Repman, director of safety and communication for Bend-La Pine.

School resource officers, or law enforcement stationed inside schools, are allowed to carry weapons, Repman said.

Carrie Douglass, chair of the Bend-La Pine School Board, declined to state her personal feelings on allowing concealed carry in schools. First, she wanted to review the bill and the district’s policies, as well as speak with experts, she told The Bulletin.

Fellow board member Amy Tatom also said she wanted to see the bill for herself before making any comments.

But generally, Tatom — whose family owns guns, she said — doesn’t think firearms should be inside schools.

“I think guns, with education and proper safety measures, are something that exist in our society, and aren’t going away anytime soon,” she told The Bulletin. “But do I believe guns belong on school property? Absolutely not.”

Jace Bracelin, a junior at Summit High School, had mixed feelings on not allowing concealed carry in schools. On one hand, he knew people currently had the right to do so, but he also believes it would be smart to not allow guns inside schools.

“I would hope it’s common sense not to bring a gun into a school,” Bracelin, 17, said. “If it isn’t, I could see the need for action to be taken.”

Furthermore, if visitors shouldn’t have guns in school, then neither should police officers stationed at the schools, Bracelin said.

“I don’t necessarily think anybody should have a gun in a school: no students, no adults, and no cops,” he said.

“I think guns, with education and proper safety measures, are something that exist in our society, and aren’t going away anytime soon. But do I believe guns belong on school property? Absolutely not.”

— Amy Tatom, Bend-La Pine School Board member

This bill is also being mulled over by Deschutes County and city of Bend officials.

Commission Chair Tony DeBone said the commission has yet to discuss the bill, but that in general he does not support the idea of creating a subset of places where people can and can’t concealed carry weapons.

“I have not been supportive of implementing a ban like that,” DeBone said Friday.

Commissioner Phil Chang said he did not have a comment. Commissioner Patti Adair did not respond to a request for comment.

Bend City Councilor Barb Campbell said she thinks not allowing firearms into city buildings is a good idea, though she has concerns about how a ban like that would be enforced. Campbell said there have been a handful of moments as a councilor where she has felt unsafe.

“I have thought through what would I do, how would I respond,” Campbell said, in reference to someone with a gun coming into city hall.

Bend City Councilor Megan Perkins is in favor of banning weapons from city buildings.

“It should be a priority to protect our buildings that are essential to the functioning of government,” Perkins wrote in a text.

“With the increase in extremist groups in Central Oregon we need to do everything we can for public safety.”

Weapons are already prohibited in some public buildings, including municipal court and City Hall, said Joshua Romero, a spokesperson for the city.

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