

Weddings

Continued from C1

A couple could send out wedding invitations during moderate risk, only to have the permitted numbers reduced if the county backtracks to a higher risk.

“It can really mess with somebody’s stuff,” said Latham. “If last week you can have a wedding with 150 people and now this week you can only have a wedding with 50 people, what do you do?”

The result, said Latham, is having to tell some friends and relatives to cancel their travel plans and stay home. That type of uncertainty has forced couples to reschedule for the second half of 2021 or even 2022. When dates get pushed back it represents lost revenue for the wedding industry.

“There are only so many Saturdays and I only have so many DJs available,” said Latham, who has taken out loans and sold equipment to get by. “It’s definitely a revenue decrease based on the way the industry works.”

Garrett Jaenicke, director of marketing for the Bend Chamber of Commerce, said he has heard anecdotally from chamber members that they have had to close due to the downturn in business caused by the restrictions.

“Some may come back as vaccines get more widely distributed, but one of the challenges and frustrations for those still in business has been the yo-yo effect of the loosening and tightening of in-person restrictions by the state as cases fall and accelerate,” said Jaenicke.

The downturn in weddings has affected venues too. Bend Park and Recreation District averages 130 weddings per year at Aspen Hall and Hollinshead Barn each year. In 2020 that number fell to just 30.

This year the district expects that number to climb up to around 100, said Julie Brown, a spokesperson for the District.

Damon Runberg, Oregon Employment Department Regional Economist, said the local event business has been cut in half due to COVID-19. His data does not break down weddings specifically but does include many who are employed in the live events industry.

“There has been very little discernible recovery through Q4 2020,” said Runberg.

The Wedding Report, a Tucson-based market research firm that compiles wedding-related data, said the number of weddings last year nationwide dipped to 1.1 million, down from 2.1 million in

2019, a drop of 48%. The firm projects 2.8 million weddings this year before falling back to 2.2 million weddings in 2022. The report adds that 7% of couples canceled their wedding event in 2020, but were still married. And 46% of couples were cutting back on their wedding expenses by an average of 31%.

In Oregon, pre-pandemic, the wedding industry generated around \$720 million a year, according to data collected by the Live Events Industry of Oregon, an advocacy group.

There have been some bright spots in the wedding industry. Even when a couple cancels their party plans due to social distancing rules, the bride still needs a dress.

“We had a lot of brides that were planning on a 2020 wedding, and they are rescheduling for this year,” said Robin Bernard, manager at Cordially Invited Bridal in Bend. “With everyone excited about things opening up, 2021 is (looking like) a huge wedding year”

Jennifer Nichols, owner of Bespoke Bride in Bend, said women are often opting to scale down their dress choices, choosing one appropriate for a small wedding or elopement.

“It was kind of cool seeing brides shift their focus and be intentional about why they

were getting married and what that would look like and still moving forward,” said Nichols.

Even though sales of the elaborate, pricier dresses dropped in 2020, Nichols said business picked up quickly after the initial lockdown last year. Some brides even bought two dresses — a low-key one for a small ceremony and a more traditional dress to use later when the easing pandemic permits a party.

“Once July hit, we have been pretty busy ever since,” she said.

Nichols, who has owned her business for three years, anticipates business will be steady this summer and believes the demand for simple dresses and simple weddings will continue even after the pandemic subsides.

A smaller wedding saves money and allows couples to concentrate on certain aspects of the special day, said Nichols, such as the cake or floral arrangements.

“Not having 200 people might allow them to get their dream wedding bouquet instead,” said Nichols. “Even with the pandemic winding down, I think the trend of a smaller more intentional wedding is probably going to stay for a while.”

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Solve these puzzles on C4

SOLUTION TO TODAY'S SUDOKU

3	1	5	9	7	6	2	8	4
6	9	8	5	4	2	3	7	1
2	7	4	1	3	8	9	5	6
9	2	6	8	5	3	1	4	7
7	5	3	2	1	4	8	6	9
4	8	1	7	6	9	5	3	2
1	3	2	4	8	7	6	9	5
5	6	7	3	9	1	4	2	8
8	4	9	6	2	5	7	1	3

SOLUTION TO TODAY'S JUMBLE

JUMBLE
Answer:
EXHALE REBUKE ENSIGN
RARITY BESTOW UNTUCK
The shop that sold cakes, pies, cookies, etc. in Stockholm was a —
“SWEETISH” BAKERY

NYT CROSSWORD SOLUTION

S	N	A	R	F	J	U	S	T	S	O	M	A	N	N	E	R	E	D			
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LAT CROSSWORD SOLUTION

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Brooks

Continued from C1

Some employers believe that federal unemployment checks are keeping a portion of the labor force, particularly in service industries home because they can survive off the increased income. Although this may be true for some, it only brings full-time minimum wage earners to about \$12 per hour, which is less than what many are now earning in entry-level, full-time positions. While these unemployment checks end on Sept. 1, it remains unclear how many people will wait until then to reenter the workforce.

Lack of child care is another significant factor limiting the ability of many parents to get back to work. It is impacting everyone, but mostly women, who lag behind returning to the workplace by nearly 2 to 1 nationwide. The reopening of schools will help many parents go back to work, but after-school care will be harder to come by. Even worse, the infant to preschool child care network in Central Oregon has been devastated by COVID-19. It will take a well-coordinated and expedited effort between incoming federal funding, the Oregon Early Learning Division and regional networks to help child care providers open

and fill even a fraction of the need.

The rising cost of living in Bend is also impacting our labor pool. Housing costs are one of the biggest barriers to attracting employees. Many can't find housing they can afford and have had to move out of town or have decided not to come here at all. Businesses are increasing wages but find the cost of housing far outpaces what they can afford to pay their employees. We've seen this problem coming for years and the pandemic has made the situation much worse.

The pandemic also made what looks to be permanent changes to how and where we

work. People have experienced more flexibility than ever before and may not be interested in returning to their pre-pandemic schedule. This may force employers to think differently about how they schedule and build in flexibility to attract talent.

All these factors contribute to the lack of labor in both the short and long term and will require new ways to attract, train and accommodate employees — and most of what needs fixing will not come easy.

■ Katy Brooks is the Bend Chamber of Commerce CEO. Her vision for the chamber is to catalyze an environment where businesses, their employees and the community thrive.



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