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Portland-trained steeplechaser set for 2022 World Championships in Eugene, **Sports A5**

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St. Charles Health System CEO Sluka steps down

BY SUZANNE ROIG
The Bulletin

After eight years at the helm of Central Oregon's four-hospital health system, Joe Sluka said he will step down as president and CEO.

Sluka cited the challenges of the pandemic and the financial fallout

from that effort at St. Charles Health System as reasons for stepping down.

"I am so proud of this organization and the more than 4,500 employees who put their hearts into caring for our community every single day," Sluka said in a prepared statement. "This is a very difficult decision. I feel it is time for me

to step aside, recharge and provide the opportunity for new operational leaders to guide St. Charles forward."

St. Charles Health System ended the first quarter of the year at an operating loss of \$17.2 million, according to the hospital. The losses have been attributed to caring for

the community, at or near full capacity over the past two years of the COVID-19 pandemic. During that time, the hospital often paid wages that were three times higher than normal. And, during the early days of the pandemic, the hospital canceled many private-pay surgeries that

contribute to the hospital's profitability. Earlier this year the hospital system laid off 105 nonclinical staff members and eliminated 76 vacant positions as a way to offset the losses. It also instituted other cost-cutting measures to stem financial losses.

See **Sluka** / A4



Personnel from Bend Fire & Rescue, Deschutes County Search and Rescue and others conduct joint water-rescue training Tuesday at the low-head dam near Pioneer Park on the Deschutes River in Bend.

SWIFT-WATER RESCUE

Pioneer Park low-head dam poses unique danger

BY GARRETT ANDREWS • The Bulletin

Just downstream from Pioneer Park in Bend is a manmade feature interrupting the Deschutes River, a smooth and seemingly peaceful slope of water in this stretch.

On Tuesday, rescue specialists from around the area conducted swift-water rescue training at the low-head dam near the park, an unusual hazard in a river full of potentially deadly hazards.

"If you look at it from upstream, it looks kind of innocuous," said Brian Boyd, Bend Fire & Rescue's special operations coordinator. "But it's certainly a hazard. Fortunately, we don't get a lot of floater traffic down in this section."

Taking part in the training Tuesday were Bend Fire & Rescue's special operations team, the Deschutes County

Sheriff's Office's Search and Rescue Team and volunteers and professionals from Sisters and Redmond.

In addition to swift-water rescue, the rescue teams conduct training throughout the year on rope rescues, working in confined spaces, on ice and in structural collapses. The Deschutes River in Bend being one of the region's most popular — and affordable — attractions, it's important for emergency workers to keep their skills honed, Boyd said.

In the morning Tuesday, training focused on rescue techniques for foot entrapments in the river, a common rescue scenario. In the afternoon, rescue personnel donned dry suits, tossed a tethered dummy in the rapids and used a raft to extract it.

See **Rescue** / A4



Rescue personnel pull a dummy aboard a raft during water-rescue training Tuesday on the Deschutes River. Low-head dams can be particularly hazardous because the way the water circulates, it can easily trap someone underwater at the bottom.

Bird flu found in Bend

Quarantine issued for surrounding area

Bulletin staff report

Bird flu has been reported in Bend.

The Oregon Department of Agriculture and the U.S. Department of Agriculture confirmed the state's fifth case of highly pathogenic avian influenza, or bird flu, in Deschutes County, and has called for a regional quarantine of birds in Bend and the surrounding area.

The disease was detected in a noncommercial flock affecting about 30 chickens and 40 ducks and geese, the Oregon Department of Agriculture said in a news release Tuesday. The quarantine includes the city of Bend and much of the outlying area.

See **Bird flu** / A12

CENTRAL OREGON State expands outreach to aging veterans

Program focuses on benefit education

BY ANNA KAMINSKI
The Bulletin

Central Oregon is home to approximately 20,000 military veterans, over half of them above the age of 65. Many of these veterans either fail to utilize or underutilize government benefits.

They often don't know they qualify for them.

The Oregon Department of Veterans Affairs hopes to change that. It announced on Monday that it is expanding a volunteer program to educate Oregon's aging veterans about the availability of financial, health care and long-term care benefits. It is hosting a volunteer training on July 21 in Redmond.

"We're trying to reach out to the more rural areas and say, 'Look. Everywhere is important,'" said Mark Newell, the veteran volunteer coordinator for the department.

See **Veterans** / A4

‘Call to arms,’ ‘screaming,’ and a Trump tweet never sent

Former president told repeatedly his election-fraud claims were false. He continued to push them anyway

BY MARY CLARE JALONICK, NOMAAN MERCHANT AND FARNOUSH AMIRI
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — A presidential tweet that some saw as a "call to arms." An "unhinged" meeting in the White House. Violent extremists planning to

storm the Capitol as President Donald Trump pushed lies about election fraud.

At its seventh hearing, the House Jan. 6 panel on Tuesday showed further evidence that Trump was told, repeatedly, that his claims of fraud were

false — but that he continued to push them anyway. And at the same time, he turned to the widest possible audience on Twitter, calling his supporters, some of them violent, to Washington on Jan. 6, 2021, to not only protest but "be wild" as Congress certified President Joe Biden's victory.

A major focus of the hearing was Trump's Dec. 19 tweet about a "big protest" at the coming joint session of

Congress: "Be there, will be wild!"

Florida Rep. Stephanie Murphy said the tweet "served as a call to action and in some cases as a call to arms." She said the president "called for backup" as he argued that Vice President Mike Pence and other Republicans didn't have enough courage to try to block President Joe Biden's win at the Jan. 6 joint session.

See **Jan. 6** / A12