

Health

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Social isolation and loneliness

While Oregon Health Authority officials said social distancing measures put in place by Gov. Kate Brown seem to be slowing the spread of the virus, they run the risk of exacerbating social isolation and loneliness, a health problem particularly hardest on older adults and people with pre-existing health conditions and disabilities.

In a 2019 report by the Rural Health Research Center, rural communities have stronger communities than their urban counterparts, rural communities have become more socially isolated in recent years as rural economies declined and young people moved away.

Sharon Kuehn, the manager of CCS's helpline, the peer-to-peer David Romprey Oregon Warmline, said the support line has seen considerable uptick in call volume within the last two weeks, from an average of 85 calls a day to 200.

Kuehn said as the number of positive cases in the state continued to climb, she pulled Warmline operators together to ask how the calls were going. They said there was nothing out of the ordinary. But then, two weeks into the crisis, there were all kinds of concerns surrounding the outbreak.

Kuehn said the calls ranged from people who were concerned about catching the virus, or someone they care about getting the virus, to low-income folks concerned about losing their job.

The Warmline, staffed by people with various life experiences — mental illness, addictions, hospitalizations, thoughts of suicide, loneliness, and economic challenges — are there to relate to people as an equal.

"The Warmline defines a peer as an equal," Labhart said. "The folks that are staff-



Contributed photo
David Romprey Oregon Warmline Program Manager Sharon Kuehn said the peer-to-peer support line has seen a significant uptick in calls as the number of positive cases of COVID-19 has increased. Kuehn n said the support line, which operates seven days a week from 9 a.m. to 11 p.m., is staffed by people who have endured various mental health issues in their lives.

ing that are not master's level clinicians. They're people with lived experience that have specific training to our organization. Relationship building, listening and empathy — it is really a support line and not a therapy line."

Kuehn said the phone operators are there to be interested in the caller's story and are not there to tell a person what to do.

"We strive to do the opposite," said Kuehn. "The caller is just thinking things through along with you and often that is the best way to relate."

Kuehn said that Intentional Peer Support, the model used to operate the Warmline, focuses on creating connections, identifying and validating the world view and story of others and remaining mutual in support of one another to foster trust in the relationship. From there, the goal is to move toward a story or something they want instead of trying to avoid what they do not want.

"It is about moving from fear and instead to a sense of hope and possibility," said Kuehn.

Prices

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of the emergency. Hand soap, hand sanitizer and toilet paper are considered items that protect the safety, health and welfare of the public during the COVID-19 emergency.

The DOJ deems an "unconscionably excessive price" as 15% or more higher than either the price the merchant sold the same item for immediately before the market disruption commenced, or the price the same or similar goods sold for in or near the area covered by the declaration immediately before the market disruption commenced.

The Oregon Capital Bureau reported that, on a conference call this week, Gov. Kate Brown and Attorney General Ellen Rosenblum spoke with members of the AARP, who received 500 complaints on its price-gouging hotline.

Responding to the surge in price gouging, the Oregon Department of Justice has sent more than 20 cease-and-desist letters to businesses, ordering them to reduce their prices on toilet paper, hand sanitizer, face masks or other essentials. Rosenblum said most businesses complied after learning price gouging was illegal.

The DOJ's report, which listed pricing from multiple stores, invoices from Chester's and a pricing index from the USDA that showed the price of eggs tripled in March, said Chester's had not price gouged the cost of eggs.

As demand for eggs moved from the restaurant business and institutional sectors to retail and grocery, egg producers have scrambled to meet the spike in demand as consumers stocked up for the coronavirus stay-at-home orders and the Easter holiday.



The Eagle/Steen Mitchell
When suppliers' prices rise, grocers are faced with two options: pass along the cost to consumers or take the hit to profit.



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"This is a once-in-a-lifetime situation," Oakdell Farms president and co-owner Cliff Lillywhite, said in a March 30 interview with EO Media Group. "Recently we've had to do some things we've never had to do to allocate product based on availability amid exceptional demand."

Lillywhite's company operates egg farms in Pasco, Washington, Franklin, Idaho, and Lewiston, Utah, under the Oakdell and Ritewood banners. He said on the company website that many stores "are now getting back to their nor-

mal supply of eggs, but some shortages may still occur for a short period of time. ... We are doing our best to quickly resolve this issue to better meet your needs."

With the restaurant industry basically shut down on the state and national level, most meals are eaten at home, causing additional demand at grocery stores.

Temporary closures of restaurants — Squeeze-In Restaurant & Deck, 1188 Brewing Company and Grubsteak Mining Company Bar & Grill in John Day and the Oxbow Restaurant and Saloon

in Prairie City — are putting more demand on local retail stores.

Lillywhite told EO Media Group that he advised retail clients their egg sales could be 20-25% higher until schools reopen and social distancing is no longer an issue.

"We are aware some Americans have faced empty store shelves and egg cases early in the outbreak, and we understand these concerns," United Egg Producers President and CEO Chad Gregory said in a statement. "UEP's farmer-members are committed to producing a consistent supply of eggs and are partnering with their customers to restock egg cases across the U.S."

Wyllie said people need to consider that the supply of eggs are dependent upon how many eggs a hen lays.

Lillywhite said a hen lays an average of an egg per day, and they do not start producing until they are 22 to 24 weeks old.

Brad Carlson of the Capital Press contributed to this story.

Economy

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Bonham added that they have been working with the governor to try and come up

with a plan so restaurants can allow dining in through cleaning standards, capacity limits or other measures.

"We are attempting to put together a road map on how to get to that, and there are sev-

eral different components. All of those issues are big issues that affect everyone, restaurants and businesses" Findley said. "We have to be able to reach the relaxation of those standards, and we're putting

together some standards to realize that."

A special session dealing with the pandemic will probably happen around the next revenue forecast in May, according to Bonham.



Grant County Oregon Covid-19 Coronavirus Emergency Operations Center (EOC) Information Page.

The Grant County COVID-19 EOC (emergency operations center) has a web site.

www.gc-or-covid-19.info/

- It provides daily updated statistics for COVID-19 tests undertaken in the county as provided by the Grant County Health Department.
- The website also provides scam alerts, content for families and others impacted by stay at home restrictions, health information to assist keeping you and your family safe.
- The website offers assistance on money-related matters for: unemployment matters, employers who have lost business and for small business owners who have been impacted.
- It provides up-to-date information on what is or is not currently allowed. There is content about what you can do to help and there are answers to many frequently asked questions.
- Employees of the county will all find content specific to their needs during this time. We encourage people to take a look.

The EOC welcomes your helpful suggestions for improving the website.
The website address is: gc-or-covid-19.info/