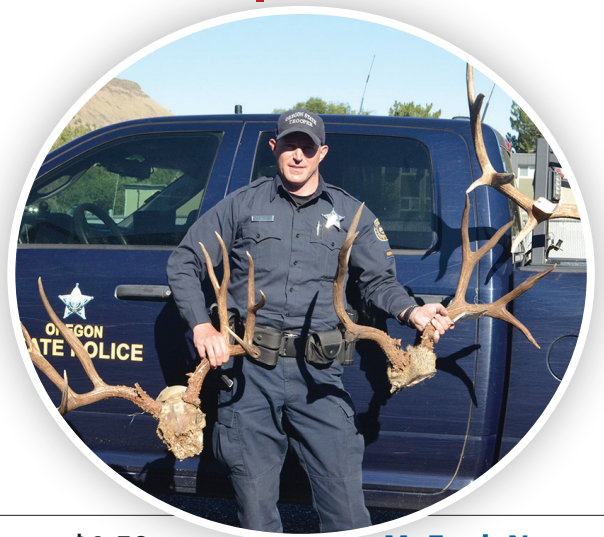


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Five men charged for string of thefts in Grant County

38 victims, 14 chain saws, 12 firearms listed in the charges

By Rudy Diaz
Blue Mountain Eagle

Five young men face a variety of charges related to a string of thefts — including 14 chain saws and 12 firearms — over the last year in Grant County.

The thefts began Sept. 14, 2019, and continued until June 26, according to multiple indictments filed Aug. 19 in Grant County Circuit Court by Grant County District Attorney Jim Carpenter. At least 38 victims were reported in the indictments, listing a variety of items including chain saws, guns, binoculars, backpacks, wallets, tools and supplies stolen from vehicles and homes.

Tanner E. Walczyk, born in 1999, of Grant and Umatilla counties is charged with 30 counts of criminal conspiracy, 22 counts of first-degree theft, 12 counts of second-degree theft, two counts of third-degree theft, three counts of second-degree burglary, 18 counts of unlawful entry into motor vehicle, nine counts of second-degree trespassing, five counts of third-degree criminal mischief, one count of first-degree mischief and two counts of menacing that span from September 2019 to June 2020, according to the Aug. 19 indictments.

Walczyk was also charged

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Austin Catron



Clayton Ellis



Jonas Waite



Tanner Walczyk

Chester's fined for mask noncompliance

By Steven Mitchell
Blue Mountain Eagle

Customers wishing to enter Chester's Thriftway will now be required to mask up after Oregon's Occupational Safety and Health Administration slapped the grocery store with a fine Sept. 2 for failure to comply with Gov. Kate Brown's mask order.

According to a sign in front of



Robert Hunt

the store, the message is clear: Due to OSHA's recent fines, they cannot let people in the store without a face covering — no exceptions.

"It comes down to: We were trying to be nice and let those people still shop," Robert Hunt, the store manager, told

the Eagle Friday. "But that bit us in the butt."

Hunt said he is not sure how much the actual fine will be and that this is the eighth complaint that OSHA received about either Chester's employees not wearing masks or staff allowing customers to shop without face coverings.

OSHA spokesman Aaron Corvin said, under OSHA penalty

rules, a severe violation that is not a willful or repeated offense, carries a minimum penalty of \$100 and a maximum of \$12,675.

Chester's Operations Manager Bill Wyllie said OSHA considers the number of employees a business has and their record and then assesses the fine amount from there.

Wyllie said Chester's has

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'ONE PERSON DIES BY SUICIDE EVERY 10 HOURS IN OREGON'



Eagle file photo

Community Counseling Solutions Clinical Director Thad Labhart says in general suicide rates in Eastern Oregon are a lot higher than other parts of the state.

County continues toward Zero Suicide

By Steven Mitchell
Blue Mountain Eagle

With COVID-19 continuing to take a toll on the nation's collective mental health, Grant County health officials remain steadfast in their systematic approach to ensure people do not fall through the cracks as the country heads into National Suicide Prevention Week.

Suicide rates in the U.S. have increased across the country by 24%, according to the Centers for Disease Control.

Community Counseling Solutions Clinical Director Thad Labhart said the national suicide rate per 100,000 people is 14%, and in Oregon the rate is roughly 19%.

"One person dies by suicide every 10 hours in Oregon," Labhart said.

Labhart said the leading cause of death for people between the ages of 10 and 24 is suicide. And, he said, more than five times as many people die by suicide in the state than they do by alcohol-related car accidents.

"And in general in Eastern Oregon, it's a lot



EO Media Group file photo

Grant County Health Administrator and Community Counseling Solutions Executive Director Kimberly Lindsay

higher," he said. "In general frontier rural counties in the West have even higher rates."

Labhart said he sourced the data points through the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention.

Coupled with the grim statistics surrounding

HELP IS AVAILABLE

If you or someone you know is experiencing a mental health crisis, know that help is available.

- Call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline run by Lines For Life at 800-273-8255 or text '273TALK' to 839863.
- En español: 888-628-9454. TTY: 800-799-4TTY (4889).
- Youthline is a teen-to-teen crisis and help line. Teens are available to help daily, 4 to 10 p.m. Pacific Time (off-hour calls answered by Lines for Life). Call 877-968-8491 or text teen2teen to 839863 or chat at oregonyouthline.org.

suicide both nationally and across the state, Community Counseling Solutions Executive Director Kimberly Lindsay told the Eagle Aug. 25 that she is

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Gov. Brown extends COVID-19 emergency order

By Gary A. Warner
Oregon Capital Bureau

Oregon will stay under the COVID-19 state of emergency in place since March until Nov. 3, Gov. Kate Brown announced last week.

Brown's executive order effectively means the status quo will remain in place. The first order was issued March 8 and has now been renewed twice. The order allows previous restrictions to stay in place and provides legal backup for actions by the state related to the pandemic.

"Six months after this crisis began, we have made progress," Brown said. "Together, we have slowed the spread of this disease."

Brown said the pandemic is far from under control in Oregon and elsewhere, and the extension of the emergency order will ensure continu-



PMG file photo/Jaime Valdez

Gov. Kate Brown, at a May press event, wearing her mask in public.

ity of efforts crucial to public health.

The extension will continue the phased reopening of Oregon, and keep in place mandates on busi-

nesses, schools, child care and higher education.

The order came as the United States passed six million reported cases of COVID-19 since the pandemic began just before Jan. 1, according to the Johns Hopkins Coronavirus Resource Center. There have been more than 189,400 deaths in the United States.

The Oregon Health Authority on Tuesday reported 169 new COVID-19 cases in the state, bringing the total to 28,355. Four new deaths were reported, bringing the state total to 486 since the pandemic began.

Worldwide, there have been 27.4 million reported cases and 894,012 deaths, according to the Johns Hopkins report.

Oregon has had a relatively low infection and death rate compared to the rest of the country, but the United

States has higher rates than most countries.

While noting progress in the fight against COVID-19, Brown underlined that infection rates were not low enough to allow for in-person instruction at all but a few school districts.

"As students across Oregon begin a school year far different than any other before, it is clear that, at current COVID-19 levels, it will not be safe in much of the state for children to return to in-classroom instruction for months to come," Brown said.

Brown said only a vaccine will ensure that a semblance of normalcy will return to public life. There are currently 36 vaccines in clinical trials and a total of 90 under various stages of development.

Three vaccines have advanced to Phase 3 of trials needed for approval to use in the United States.

