



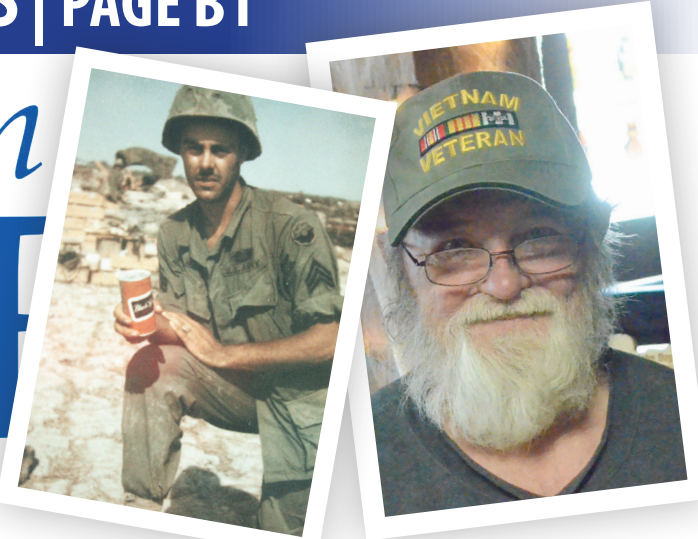
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McKinley elected Grant County sheriff

Former undersheriff 'pleasantly surprised' by vote margin

By Steven Mitchell
Blue Mountain Eagle

Having lost by such a narrow margin to Grant County Sheriff Glenn Palmer in 2016 — 2,208 to 2,065 — Todd McKinley said he was "pleasantly surprised" by the margin by which he was elected as Grant County's next sheriff.



Todd McKinley

McKinley, who needed roughly 75 people to change their minds this election, defeated Palmer, who has held the office for 16 years, by over 600 votes: 2,548 to 1,936.

McKinley said he spent no money on his campaign, and he did not want it to appear to the public as if he did.

"It always is better when the

people come forward and make a choice," he said. "It needed to be the people's choice."

Up until the polls closed, McKinley said he was "at peace" with whatever the results were going to be.

"It was going to be how it was going to be," he said.

When he is sworn in January, McKinley said he would come in and look at what is working within the sheriff's office and what is not working and make the appropriate changes. However, he stressed that

those changes would be incremental.

"I am not going to be jumping in and making drastic changes," he said. "Why fix something that is not broken?"

He said there are a lot of good employees at the sheriff's office.

"I worked with many of them," he said. "They know who I am."

McKinley, a longtime Grant County resident, will be leading the office where he began his policing career.

He was a reserve in the Grant County Sheriff's Office under Palm-

er's predecessor, Fred Reusser, in 1998 and got hired on as a full-time deputy in 2001, working alongside Palmer until 2015, and also serving as undersheriff for a time.

Over the years, the relationship soured, and McKinley took the helm at the probation department in 2015.

He said he appreciated the voter turnout this year.

"It was great to see Grant County show up," he said. "This is the people's office."

Palmer declined to comment.

Too close to call: Rookstool, Labhart tied in John Day council race as of Tuesday

Challenged ballots, those received by other counties could impact results

By Rudy Diaz
Blue Mountain Eagle

Although most Grant County races were clearly decided shortly after polls closed, the race for John Day City Council remains too close to call Tuesday morning with a tie for the final seat.

Incumbents David Holland and Elliot Sky were reelected with 551 and 501 votes, respectively. For the last open seat, Heather Rookstool and Chris Labhart are tied as of Tuesday with 470 votes each.

Grant County Clerk Brenda Percy said there were three ballots counted on Friday, which were received on time in other counties and forwarded here.

Grant County is waiting to receive about two more ballots from other counties.

If the vote totals for Rookstool and Labhart are within one, it triggers a hand count.

"She has to get within one (vote) of Mr. Labhart before it will trigger a hand count," Percy said Nov. 4 when two votes separated the candidates. "... I'm not going to be surprised if I have to do a hand count."

Percy said she's currently planning to hand count the ballots Nov. 16.

There were also 20 ballots that were challenged on election night. Percy said, historically, challenged ballots are usually not rectified after the election.

If the ballot signature doesn't match the signature on file, or if an envelope is not signed, Percy said she makes an attempt to call the person, and every person whose ballot is challenged receives a letter stating their signature has been challenged. They have 14 days after the election to get the signature fixed, which could impact the John Day council race.

A total of 4,636 ballots were counted in Grant County as of Nov. 10, according to Percy.

Elected officials will take office on the first business day of the new year, Jan. 4.



Eagle file photo
Grant County Clerk Brenda Percy said she is planning to do a hand count for the John Day City Council race Nov. 16.



Heather Rookstool



Chris Labhart



The Eagle/Rudy Diaz
The ballot machine counts votes from a test deck, which is used to make sure the machine is working well.

OUTBREAK

Health officials trying to stop the spread of COVID-19 as county case count doubles in a week



The Eagle/Steven Mitchell

Grant County Health Department staffers wait for cars to pull up to the Grant County Fairgrounds during drive-through testing Thursday. Grant County Health Administrator Kimberly Lindsay said 10% of 139 people who were tested were positive for COVID-19 in a Friday press release.

"I THINK MOST OF US HAVE COVID FATIGUE. I WOULD BE SURPRISED IF THEY DIDN'T. THE THING IS COVID DOESN'T HAVE COVID FATIGUE."

—Kimberly Lindsay, Grant County Health Administrator

By Steven Mitchell
Blue Mountain Eagle

DISTANCE LEARNING

Some Grant County schools have switched to distance learning because of the uptick in Grant County COVID-19 cases.

See the story on A7.

The number of positive COVID-19 cases in Grant County has doubled in about a week.

As health officials reported a jump Monday to 54 positive COVID-19 cases in the county and some schools shifted to distance learning, Grant County Health Administrator Kimberly Lindsay said she understands that most people in the county have "COVID fatigue."

"I think most of us have COVID fatigue. I would be surprised if they didn't," she said. "The thing is COVID doesn't have COVID fatigue."

The surge in cases in the county reflects a rise in cases statewide. The Oregon Health Authority reported 723 new cases Monday and one new death, bringing the state's total number of cases to 51,155 with 734 deaths.

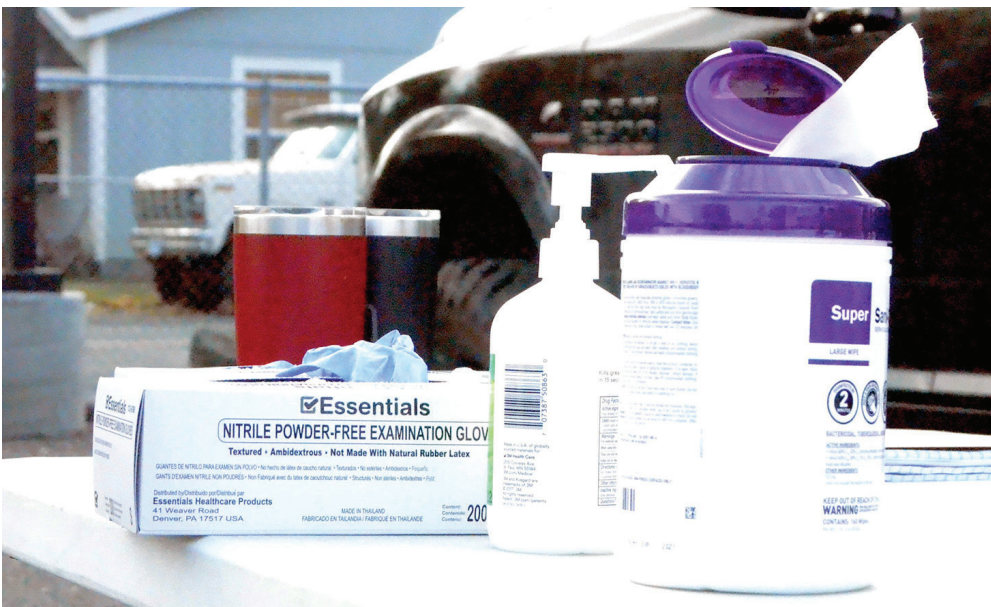
Lindsay said contact tracers have linked a couple of the local positive cases to a few different sources, but she emphasized the staff is still investigating.

Lindsay said it was Halloween weekend and people were "out and about." She said a couple of the cases were in one place, and the person who brought it there contracted the virus somewhere else. That is what the contact tracers are trying to "drill down" on and find out, she said.

In addition to curbside testing last week at the Grant County Fairgrounds, Lindsay said seven contact tracers worked on getting in touch with people on Thursday. Lindsay said that 16 of the 139 people tested at the fairgrounds Thursday were positive for the virus.

"Right now, our focus is to get in front of it," she said.

See COVID-19, Page A12



Gloves, hand sanitizer and wipes sit on the table Thursday during Grant County's curbside testing at the fairgrounds.

The Eagle
Steven Mitchell