

Blue Mountain Care Center increases safety protocols after outbreak

Facility encourages, but does not require, COVID-19 vaccination

By Steven Mitchell
Blue Mountain Eagle

Blue Mountain Care Center has increased COVID-19 protocols after a recent outbreak.

The care center announced that six residents and seven employees tested positive for COVID-19 in March.

In a joint press release Blue Mountain Hospital District's Rebekah Rand, director of emergency services, and Lori Lane, district health information manager, said before the outbreak BMCC was practicing appropriate social distancing, hand hygiene and cough etiquette with the education provided on all three topics to

staff, residents and visitors.

The press release said that residents, visitors, and staff were all encouraged to wear proper face masks and eye protection while in the facility.

Rand and Lane said the facility's staff screened anyone entering the building, including temperature checks and screening questions about COVID-19 signs, symptoms, exposure and travel.

They said all residents were monitored for signs and symptoms of COVID-19 twice per day. Additionally, they told the Eagle, residents with any sign or symptom of COVID-19 were tested immediately for the virus.

After the onset of positive cases at the nursing home, the facility's precautions have been "enhanced." They suspended all indoor visitation, communal activities and communal dining.



Blue Mountain Care Center in Prairie City.

Contributed photo

Lane and Rand said, before the outbreak this month, the care center had been "fortunate" to avoid any positive cases among the residents since the beginning of the pandemic over a year ago.

They said there is no way to determine the virus's source at the facility definitively.

It could be in-person visits, they said, which the care center had resumed as the num-

ber of cases in the county declined. Or it may have been the coming and going of residents after restrictions were lifted. Rand and Lane said the community spread in the county was another possible source.

They said they could not comment on the employee vaccination rate at BMCC. They said between 40-50 employees work at the care

center. This includes contract, permanent and temporary staff.

"All employees were offered the vaccine when it first arrived in Grant County," they said.

Rand and Lane said all were — and still are — encouraged to get the vaccine. The press release stated they could not require employees to get vaccinated "as a condition of employment."

Nonetheless, they said, both the hospital district and the Grant County Health Department have seen a recent increase in interest in receiving the vaccine from employees and the county at large, following the recent increase in positive cases in March.

They said the hospital district respects their employees' personal decision to receive the COVID-19 vaccine. How-

ever, Rand and Lane said they "highly encourage" all employees and the community to get the vaccine to reduce the virus's spread.

Longtime Grant County residents Jim and Beth Spell, who have a family member at Blue Mountain Care Center, said the administration and staff have been "great" in keeping in contact with them about the outbreak. However, Jim Spell noted the care center does not require staff members to get the vaccine as a condition of employment.

Beth Spell she is grateful that her brother has been vaccinated.

She said a common refrain she hears after COVID-19 deaths is that they had pre-existing conditions and would have died anyway.

"We want to keep our loved ones around for as long as we can," she said.



Staff at Long Creek School receive instruction on how to carry out distance learning through iPads.

Contributed photo

Long Creek School District to receive 37 internet hot spots

By Rudy Diaz
Blue Mountain Eagle

Thirty-seven internet hot spots from AT&T will be coming to Long Creek School District soon.

AT&T announced on March 17 that, alongside Connected Nation, they are giving free internet subscriptions and free wireless hot spots to more than 450 virtual learners in Oregon.

Long Creek Administrative Assistant and Deputy Clerk Jennie Freeman said a general email was sent out from AT&T regarding this opportunity to apply for the grant to get the hot spots.

"We applied a while back, and I just heard recently that AT&T decided to award Long Creek with a grant," Freeman said.

Freeman said there are no matching funds required, and it was generous of them to provide the 37 hot spots.

"It's great because the internet goes down here (in Long Creek) all the time, and so it's nice to have something reliable to use and support the cell service we currently use for the iPads," Freeman said.

Earlier in the school year, Long Creek School District purchased iPads with cellular data plans for all of the students, along with cell signal boosters, when they went online for distance learning.

Freeman said the hot spots will now provide students and their families another source they can use for internet access. Freeman said she thinks the hot spots will be made available for students next school year.

"Organizations like ... Long Creek School District are critical to serving and supporting some of the most at-risk students across Oregon," said George Granger, President of AT&T Ore-

gon, in a press release from March 17. "By helping to expand connectivity for the students they serve, we can play a role in narrowing the homework gap and helping address inequities associated with virtual learning."

AT&T said in their release on March 17 that Long Creek School District is one of more than 100 organizations and school districts to benefit from a \$10 million commitment announced last year.

While Gov. Kate Brown ordered schools earlier this month to open by April 19, Long Creek office manager Jennifer Garinger said the improved access to internet will still provide a great benefit for Long Creek students as they return to the school building.

"The technology gives

us a lot of options for students and their different situations," Garinger said. "We've gotten really good at using technology to supply content and interaction.

To me, I can see this allowing little schools like Long Creek to gain more access to other teachers and classes because we now know how to do it online."

Your Rural Family Health Clinic



Services Provided:

- Primary Care
- Acute Care
- Women's Health Exams
- Men and Children Exams
- Immunizations
- Family Planning
- Contraception
- Pregnancy Testing & Referrals
- HIV Testing & Referrals
- Cacocon
- WIC
- High Risk Infants
- Maternity Case Management

Grant County Health Department does not discriminate against any person on the basis of race, color, national origin, disability, or age in admission, treatment, or participation in its programs, services and activities, or in employment.

Grant County HEALTH Department

528 E. Main, St. E.,
John Day

Monday - Thursday
7am - 6pm
Friday 8am - 5pm

Appointments available

Call and schedule your appointment today!

TOLL FREE
888-443-9104
or **541-575-0429**

County will not purchase new laptops for the airport

By Steven Mitchell
Blue Mountain Eagle

Grant County will not be buying any more new computers.

At the last Grant County Court meeting, the commissioners approved purchasing two laptops for the airport if laptops purchased for the COVID-19 Emergency Operations Center were not available.

Emergency Manager Paul Gray said the laptop County Commissioner Sam Palmer, the EOC's former public information officer, had "sitting at his house" would likely go to Grant County Regional Airport.

Gray said pilots would use the laptop to check the weather forecasts.

He said several older computers at the emergency management office are also good enough to go to the airport.

Treasurer Julie Ellison said Gray gave her five EOC laptops to check out to other telecommuting departments in October or November.

She said the sheriff's office checked out two while the



Paul Gray

corrections office has checked out one.

Gray said he held on to four of the laptops at his office in

case the emergency management office needs them for the EOC or another county-wide emergency.

Ellison said she writes down the department and the laptop tag number when equipment is checked out. Since COVID-19 is ongoing, she said there is no date that the department needs to return the laptop.

Gray said Robert Waltenburg from the Education Service District, who is also essentially the county's information technology manager, went through the computers to ensure there was nothing on them before the county made them available for other departments to check out.

He said he gave them to Ellison to check out because she is the person within the county offices who the departments reach out to for office supplies.



A MAN WAKES UP in the morning after sleeping on... an advertised bed, in advertised pajamas.

He will bathe in an **ADVERTISED TUB**, shave with an **ADVERTISED RAZOR**, have a breakfast of **ADVERTISED JUICE**, cereal and toast, glanced in an **ADVERTISED TOASTER**, put on **ADVERTISED CLOTHES** and glance at his **ADVERTISED WATCH**. He'll ride to work in his **ADVERTISED CAR**, sit at an **ADVERTISED DESK** and write with an **ADVERTISED PEN**. Yet this person hesitates to advertise, saying that advertising doesn't pay. Finally, when his non-advertised business is going under, **HE'LL ADVERTISE IT FOR SALE.**
Then it's too late.

AND THEY SAY ADVERTISING DOESN'T WORK? DON'T MAKE THIS SAME MISTAKE

Advertising is an investment, not an expense. Think about it!

Blue Mountain Eagle
MyEagleNews.com

Don't get left behind, call today! Kim Kell 541-575-0710




We want your voice to be a part of the conversations shaping Oregon's future.

Share your opinion. Earn money. Join the OVBC Panel.

panel.oregonvbc.org



YOU ARE CORDIALLY INVITED TO
GRANT COUNTY FAIRGROUNDS OPEN HOUSE
MARCH 30, 2021
4PM TO 7PM
MEET THE 2021 GRAND MARSHAL BONNIE NANCE

LOCATION; TROWBRIDGE PAVILION
SPONSORED BY CHESTERS MARKET
411 NW BRIDGE STREET
JOHN DAY, OR 97845

Come take a look at our beautiful renovated facility. Complimentary cupcakes and coffee.
Gun Raffle tickets for sale. \$5each 5 for \$20
CC Fairgrounds History Books will be available. \$35