

# '62 Days

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Farrell, born and raised in Canyon City and in his early 40s, said teachers, many of whom were locals, had the history passed down to them.

"We learned a lot of Grant County, Canyon City history in school," he said. "I don't think there's as much of that. Younger people just don't know how much of a history Canyon City has."

In passing down the history, organizers brought back the "Teen Costume Dance Party" the second night of the event this year.

Farrell said there will be two high school reunions during that weekend. He said he knows of people coming from the East Coast just for '62 Days.

Farrell said the festival looks like it will be the county's first social gathering with no COVID-19 restrictions in over a year.

"This is really important that it could be the kick-off event in getting back to normal," he said. "It's a chance to get together finally after all of this time and get back to being a community."



Whiskey Gulch Gang members celebrate the '62 Days Celebration in 2020.

Contributed photo/Joni Kabana



A past '62 Days Celebration parade motors through Canyon City.

Contributed photo/Whiskey Gulch Gang

## '62 DAYS CELEBRATION

Before the official '62 Days Celebration, festival musical act Copper Ridge will be at the Ugly Truth Bar and Grill in John Day from 7 to 10 p.m. Thursday, June 10, for an acoustic show.

### Friday, June 11

• The 100th '62 Days Celebration kicks off at 5 p.m. Sels Brewery opens at 5 p.m. with live music from Copper Ridge.

### Saturday, June 12

• Kids events, a chili cookoff and bed and stick horse races are planned during the day in Canyon City.

• Gold Rush Run, 8 a.m. at Sel's Brewery with registration from 7-7:45 a.m. The cost is the \$20 to register the day of the race and \$18 before. Registration forms are available at the chamber of commerce office.

• Parade, 11 a.m. Floats will begin to line up at 9:30 a.m. in the Humbolt Elementary School parking lot. More information about the parade can be found at the Whiskey Gulch Gang Facebook page or by calling Melissa Galbreath at 541-620-0898.

• Mock gunfight and hanging, 2 p.m. at Sels Brewery.

• Cornhole tournament, 5 p.m. with registration at 4:30 p.m. inside Sels Brewery. The buy-in is \$20, and the tourney will pay out winnings to the top three winners.

• Live music from Copper Ridge at Sels Brewery.

## Young

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"I was very generous in the community," he said. "If it were not for the people who live here, we would not have made a living here."

Young said Merilee was the president of the Grant Union school board when the school district acquired the land that would later become the Seventh Street Complex. He said at the time some residents were vocal in their opposition, but she and the board were steadfast in developing the land.

"She got cussed out by everybody in town for spending all that money," he said. "It's been the best investment they've made."

Young said events like '62 Days preserve the region's way of life. Beginning with the Native Americans who originally inhabited the area, followed by the miners, the cattlemen and the loggers, the event showcases the "continuity of history."

Jack said he hopes more young people get involved in '62 Days and continue to carry on the tradition and maintain that continuity. He said, otherwise, young people would miss out on a lot of camaraderie with people in the community.

## Labor

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"In smaller communities," he said, "there is not as much foot traffic, and there is not a bunch of employees that want to work."

He said he knows several people making more money on unemployment than they would if they worked a full-time job.

"Good for them, they are making more money," he said. "But still, it's the moral concept of you work for what you get."

Hubbard said unemployment should be a temporary lifeline for someone when they lose their job.

"There needs to be a point where all these people need to get back to work," he said.

Shawn Duncan, the Squeeze-In Restaurant and Deck owner, said the staff shortage forced her to reduce her hours.

Like other restaurant owners in the county, Duncan is trying to staff up ahead of the busy summer season. Typically, she said she would have a crew of 20 servers and cooks at this time of year. However, she said nobody wants to work.

Duncan said she got so desperate that she recruited a customer to pick up a couple of lunch shifts a week.

Shannon Adair, the owner

of 1188 Brewing Company, said while she has a full staff, she needs a few part-time workers to allow for more flexibility within the schedule.

### Pandemic-related unemployment

The Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security Act passed early in the pandemic provided a \$600 per week federal unemployment insurance supplement, in addition to regular state unemployment benefits, which expired in July.

In December, Congress passed an additional relief bill that included \$300 supplemental payments set to expire in March.

The \$1.9 trillion American

Rescue Plan signed by President Joe Biden extended the \$300 supplement to September.

### Unemployment in Oregon

The state's employment department reports that it pays out an average of \$670 per week, including the \$300 weekly payment, according to a paper published by the Oregon Office of Economic Analysis.

The authors said that works out to roughly \$16.75 per hour for someone working full time. With Oregon's minimum wage in Grant County at \$11.50, the benefit payments are more valuable. However, the authors point out that the enhanced benefits work out to \$34,800 per year, which is not close to the state's median income of \$50,700 for full-time workers.

### A regional economist view

Chris Rich, a regional economist with the state's employment department, said Grant County's 7.7% seasonally adjusted unemployment rate is relatively close to where it was before the pandemic, and low compared to historical rates in the county.

Rich told the Eagle Grant

County has the lowest labor force participation rate in Eastern Oregon, which was just over 50% percent in 2019.

He said the small number of people in the workforce is not a result of the pandemic.

Rich said last week the county currently had 45 job postings on the employment department's website. However, he noted that this is not the most precise picture. He said the job search tool does not account for the various ways that employers might reach out to job seekers, such as in the newspaper, help wanted signs, word of mouth, company websites, social media sites and referrals.

Over 85% of those jobs in John Day require some degree of higher education, certification and experience, which, he said, had not changed since the pandemic. Rich said these types of job listings also make up a sizeable share of the listings found throughout Eastern Oregon.

"These are typically difficult-to-fill openings in general, harder to fill in rural communities," he said. "And harder still in areas of geographic isolation such as Grant County."

He said the tight labor mar-

ket in the county is due mainly to the number of residents 65 or older in the county. He said the county has the largest concentration of retirees in the state as of 2020, at just over 35%.

At the same time, Rich noted, the county's share of 18- to 34-year-olds was among the lowest in Oregon, at 12%. Thus, he said, a small percentage of residents in this younger age group and a large share of residents in the older age group can have a sizeable negative impact on filling many open positions. In general, he said, Grant County has the same tight labor market it had before the pandemic.

Rich said, nationally, what is happening in the labor force is right now different everywhere.

For instance, while leisure and hospitality were among the hardest hit industries, the impact was on the "lighter side" in rural counties. These smaller, independently owned restaurants have fewer employees, and they tend to be owned and operated by a local within the county.

He said these factors allowed people to pivot and make decisions more rapidly than those in other places with a large staff.

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## Family Fun Day & Grant County Health Fair Booths

**Saturday, June 26<sup>th</sup>**  
**Grant County Fairgrounds**

**NO CHARGE for wristbands this year!**

**HOURS: 10:00 AM - 2 PM**

- Arts, Crafts & Activity Booths
- Hamburgers and Hotdogs \$1
- Kid's Bike Helmet Exchange: bring your old one or purchase one for \$6 each
- FREE - Train, Waterslide, Bounce House, Mechanical Bull, Speed Pitch, Double Basketball Hoop, Dunk Tank, Rock Wall, Health Information Booths and Snocones!

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