



# The Blue Mountain EAGLE

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## Grant County woman dies from COVID

By STEVEN MITCHELL  
Blue Mountain Eagle

COVID-19 has now claimed nine lives in Grant County.

The Grant County Health Department reported that a 57-year-old Grant County woman died in another state.

According to a Monday, Sept. 27, press release, the health department was notified of the death on Sept. 17 and has been trying to gather more information since that time.

The health department,

the release notes, has not been given a date of death and does not know if the person had any underlying medical conditions.

The health department said it encourages people to be respectful as a family in the community grieves.

The Oregon Health Authority reported 27 new deaths in Oregon on Monday, raising the state's cumulative death toll to 3,709 since the start of the pandemic.

According to the press release, the health depart-



Eagle file photo

ment continues to encourage people to take the following precautions:

- Wear a mask in-

doors and wear a mask outdoors if 6 feet of distancing cannot be maintained.

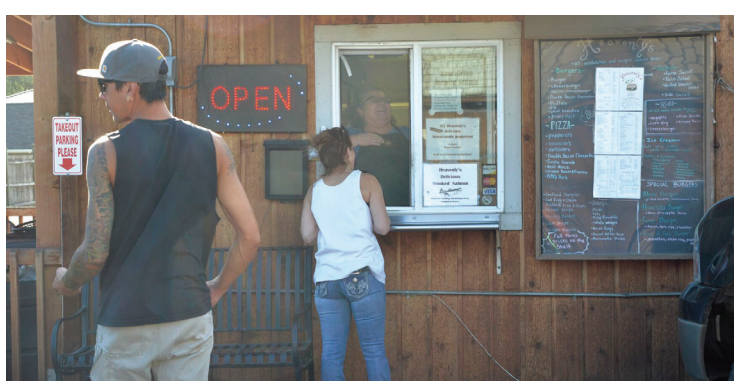
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth with unwashed hands.
- Cover your mouth and nose when you cough or sneeze.
- Stay home if you feel ill.

The health department said after someone contracts COVID-19 if they develop symptoms, they will usually appear within 14 days.

- Symptoms include:
- Fever or chills

- Cough
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Fatigue
- Muscle or body aches
- Headache
- New loss of taste or smell
- Sore throat
- Congestion or runny nose
- Nausea or vomiting
- Diarrhea

The health department encourages people with these symptoms to call 211 or the Grant County Health Department at 541-575-0429.



Bill Bradshaw/EO Media Group

Cindy Ellis, co-owner of Heavenly's Restaurant in Enterprise, greets customers through the takeout window Wednesday, Sept. 15. At times, takeout has been the only way Heavenly's could serve, partially due to the lack of employees to staff the inside seating.

## Good help getting harder to find

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** This is the fourth in a five-part series by EO Media Group looking at the issue of the lack of workers for jobs in Central and Eastern Oregon — why workers are not returning to previously held jobs and how businesses are pivoting to function without being fully staffed.

Changing demographics make hiring tough, managers say

By BILL BRADSHAW  
and ALEX WITTEW  
EO Media Group

WALLOWA COUNTY — It's no secret that employers across the state are struggling to find workers. Business owners collectively furrow their brow at the trickle of job applications as more and more businesses open and the share of workers seems to be vanishing into thin air.

The tightening labor market makes operation difficult, and expanding nearly impossible.

"It's pretty much across all industries," said Stacy Beckman, general manager of Wallowa County Grain Growers in Enterprise. "Managers I've talked to

are having difficulty trying to get help."

He said the business he runs didn't actually lose any workers to the pandemic, but expanding his workforce has been a challenge.

"Trying to add (workers) is tough," he said. "It's even tougher in a smaller community like we are."

Cindy Ellis, who owns and operates Heavenly's Restaurant in Enterprise, switched to takeout only when the pandemic first struck, but was able to resume indoor seating as businesses were allowed to reopen. But then reliable employees became scarce.

"We had to cut our indoor seating because someone we hired didn't show," she said.

Ellis on Thursday, Sept. 16, said Heavenly's was open for indoor seating.

"We got a lot of folks from Elgin," she said, and despite a small work force, "we were swamped."

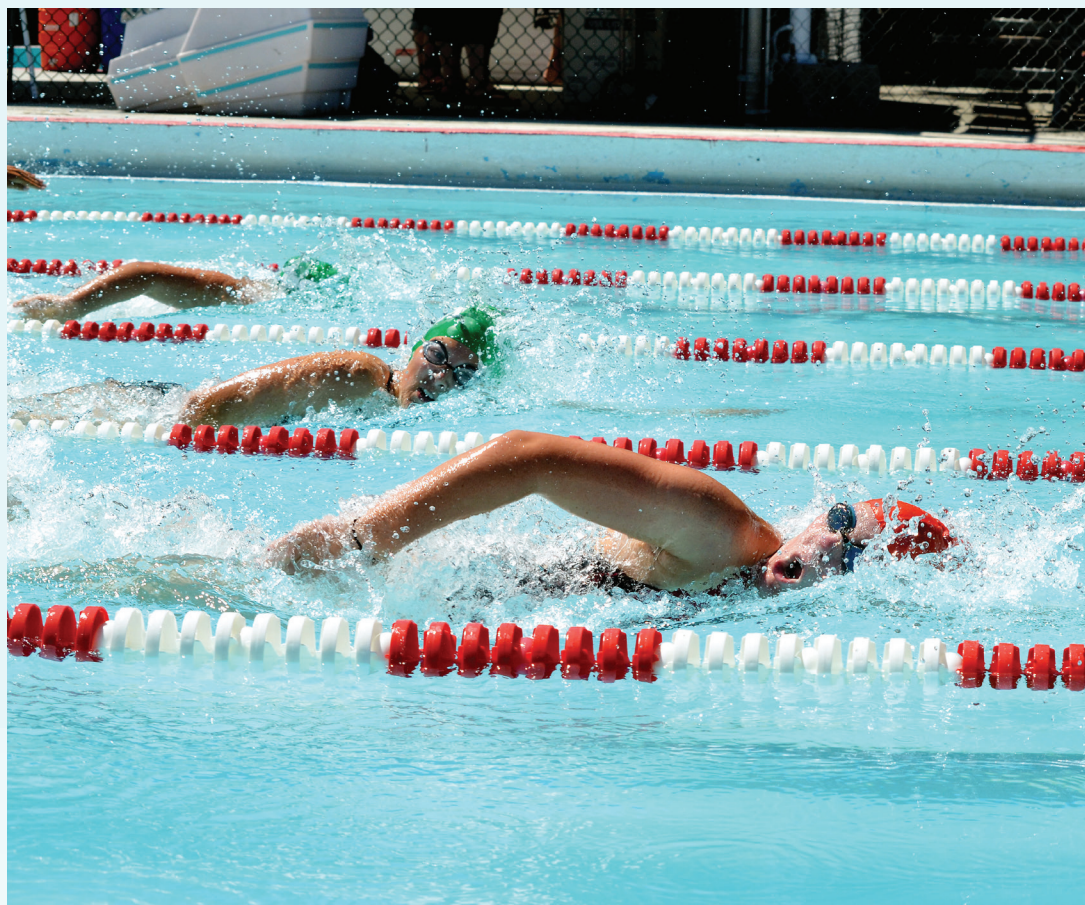
### More boomers are retiring

Eastern Oregon saw only negligible gains in population over the past decade, according to U.S. Census Bureau data. And looming within the numbers is a certainty that has taken the back seat to pandemic woes and commentary: The boomers are retiring.

In Eastern Oregon, the working population is aging out much more quickly than in previous years. The Oregon Employment Department reported in May 2021 that the working population in Eastern Oregon had grown significantly older from 2010 to 2020. That increased share means the number of workers age 55 and older makes up 26% of the overall workforce. That's up nearly 4% from 2010.

As well, the population of older workers has been declining

## Pool levy may go to ballot



Eagle file photo

John Day and the John Day/Canyon City Parks and Recreation District are moving toward putting a measure on the ballot next year to help fund construction of a new pool at the Seventh Street Complex in John Day.

### Voters could see bond measure sometime next year

By STEVEN MITCHELL  
Blue Mountain Eagle

JOHN DAY — The city of John Day and the John Day/Canyon City Parks and Recreation District are hopeful of getting a bond measure on the May or November ballot next year to help fund the construction of a six-lane, 25-yard competitive pool at Seventh Street Complex.

In an email, district board member Lisa Weigum told the Eagle that the board is exploring opportunities to bring down the \$6 million price tag to build the pool in an effort to reduce the community's cost as much as possible. According to minutes from a neighborhood meeting held by the board on Aug. 11, the estimated annual tax rate at that time was 72 cents per \$1,000 in assessed property value.

Weigum said it is important to note that the 72 cents per thousand figure is based on 2019-2020 property values and is not a hard number.

Weigum said construction depends on voters passing the measure and it is unlikely Parks and Rec would move forward if the bond does not get on the ballot and pass.

"Ideally, we'd like to start as soon as fall of 2022," she said, "but that all depends on the voters and our timeline to land on the ballot in May."

She said if they wait until the November ballot, construction would start in late spring-early summer

of 2023 on land owned by Parks and Rec if voters approve the measure.

Weigum declined to discuss possible sources for the additional funding just yet, saying the board is still strategizing its approach. However, as the board goes through the process, she said she would share their successes or failures in securing outside funding.

Some \$2 million in state funding for the project, in the form of net proceeds from lottery bonds, was provided amid a flurry of spending at the end of the 2021 Oregon legislative session.

The funding was included in Senate Bill 5534 — otherwise known as the "Christmas Tree Bill" — a collection of local projects and programs.

That means another \$4 million must be raised to cover the construction costs of the new pool.

Nick Green, John Day city manager, told the Eagle in an email in June that the project would be a joint effort by the city of John Day, the John Day/Canyon City Parks and Recreation District and the Oregon State Parks and Recreation Department.

He said the plan was to have Parks and Rec move forward with operations and maintenance costs without going to the public for fundraising. However, he told the newspaper in June that some additional fundraising might be needed to build the pool at the scale that the community wants.

**'IDEALLY, WE'D LIKE TO START AS SOON AS FALL OF 2022. BUT THAT ALL DEPENDS ON THE VOTERS AND OUR TIMELINE TO LAND ON THE BALLOT IN MAY.'**

Lisa Weigum, district board member

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