

Grant County's COVID death count at 21

Blue Mountain Eagle

JOHN DAY — A 52-year-old man who died in November has pushed the number of Grant County fatalities from the COVID-19 pandemic to 21.

The man was out of the state when he died on Nov. 21 and the Grant County Health Department has only recently been notified, the department said in a news release on Monday, April 4. He had underlying health conditions.

The department also reported two new cases of COVID-19 and announced that it will now be reporting new cases weekly rather than daily. In addition, the department noted there were no new hospitalizations of Grant County residents with



Steven Mitchell/Blue Mountain Eagle, File
A public health worker sorts COVID-19 tests at the Grant County Health Department in May 2020.

COVID-19 over the past week and no county residents are currently hospitalized with the disease.

Meanwhile, the news release noted, vaccination is still the most effective way for individuals to protect themselves from the effects of COVID-19 and reduce its

impact on the community.

Both the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Oregon Health Authority strongly recommend COVID vaccinations for anyone 5 or older. Federal and state health authorities also recommend booster shots for anyone 12 or older

starting five months after they have completed their primary vaccination series. Second boosters are recommended for anyone over the age of 50 or with a compromised immune systems starting four months after their first booster.

As of Sunday, April 3, Grant County has had a total of 1,671 cases of COVID-19, Oregon Health Authority data show. The state has had a total of 705,120 cases and 7,214 deaths from the disease.

As of Monday, April 4, the United States has recorded nearly 80.2 million cases and has logged 982,951 COVID-related deaths, according to data compiled by Johns Hopkins University.

John Day searching for Green's successor

By JUSTIN DAVIS
Blue Mountain Eagle

JOHN DAY — The city of John Day is looking for a new city manager to replace Nick Green, who has held the post since mid-2016.

Green has worn many hats during his time as John Day city manager. Most notably, his grant writing skills have brought millions of dollars to John Day and was the catalyst for a string of public works projects that have already begun or are set to start soon.

The city began advertising for the position shortly after Green announced his intention to resign at a City Council meeting in late January.

City officials are considering three applicants for the position, but their names have not been made public. That's because the City Council decided to conduct a confidential hiring process.

John Day Mayor Ron Lundbom says the process is in line with what the attorney overseeing the hiring process has advised. The public will get to meet the new city manager once the position has been filled.

Lundbom said the City Council is hoping to hire a manager who can match Green's vision for John Day, but the variety and complexity of tasks Green was involved in makes that challenging.

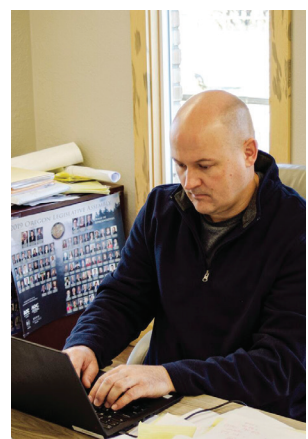
"Nick wears, like, eight hats," Lundbom said. "You look at a lot of things in his job description, and probably half of those jobs pay six figures."

Lundbom says the city took a fair amount of criticism for paying Green a 1% fee for his grant writing and administration duties, but the return on investment has been a bargain.

"Grant writers make 3-5% and sometimes up to 10%, and that is just for being a grant writer and not even being successful," Lundbom said.

"Grant administrators make the same. We have a successful grant writer and administrator, and we are paying him 1%."

The main concern for Lundbom in finding a replacement for Green is getting somebody who



Bennett Hall
Blue Mountain Eagle, File
John Day City Manager Nick Green works in his office on Jan. 24, 2022. The city is looking to hire a replacement for Green, who is stepping down at the end of June.

understands public finance, because the city budget isn't like a household or business budget. Using the police funding issue as an example, Lundbom said you can't just take money from any part of the budget and add it to the police fund.

"Public safety can only be paid by state shared revenue or public funds," the mayor said. "That's why Nick was so adamant about population growth and the county doing something about population growth."

Both state shared revenue and property tax receipts, the city's other primary source of unrestricted funds, are highly dependent on population.

Lundbom said he is confident that, whoever the next city manager is, the grant-funded projects Green started will be completed.

"I don't think we are going to be wondering if the sewer plant is going to be built because Nick Green isn't here."

The city's administrative committee will meet this week to discuss the candidates and chose one for the City Council to consider as Green's replacement.

Prairie City vet remembers Vietnam

By JUSTIN DAVIS
Blue Mountain Eagle

PRAIRIE CITY — Vietnam Veterans Day was March 29. Decorated Vietnam veteran and Prairie City resident Jack Colbert-Wilson remembers both the war and the treatment veterans of that war received when they returned home, even when he doesn't want to remember.

Colbert-Wilson did two tours of duty in Vietnam. The first was in 1968 with the 23rd Infantry Division, also known as the Americal Division. This posting isn't something Colbert-Wilson likes to talk about due to the division's association with convicted war criminal William Calley, who perpetrated the infamous My Lai massacre.

Colbert-Wilson says he "wasn't in Calley's unit, but once you get charges like that it becomes something that follows everybody in the division around."

Colbert-Wilson's duties during his first tour included perimeter patrol and mine sweeps on Highway One. Following his first tour, Colbert-Wilson was assigned to Ft. Carson in Colorado where he reenlisted and attended jump school at Ft. Bragg before becoming a radio operator with the 101st Airborne Division and redeploying to Vietnam with that unit.

"I walked through the jungle for the next 11 months with a 'shoot me' antenna sticking out of my back," Col-



This photo of Jack Colbert-Wilson was taken in 1968, when he was in boot camp in the Army prior to shipping out for Vietnam. He was 16 years old. "I lied about my age," he said.

bert-Wilson said.

The space between Colbert-Wilson's two tours was roughly three months. "I had just enough time to come back to Canyon City and see my mother, Shirley Ferguson," Colbert-Wilson said.

While in Vietnam, Colbert-Wilson was awarded an Army Commendation Medal, five Bronze Stars and one Silver Star. Colbert-Wilson says not much happened to him in Vietnam other than a piece of shrapnel he took in the shoulder. "I was lucky," he said. "The shrapnel went through two cans of C rations and that radio."

Colbert-Wilson still has the physical scar from the war as well as mental scars that will never go away.

"I've been diagnosed with severe PTSD," he said. "My

mind is never going to go away from that place."

Colbert-Wilson remembers the treatment he and other Vietnam veterans received when they came home following their tours of duty in Vietnam.

"The first time I got back I was spit on, we were called baby killers and murderers and I had dirty diapers thrown at me." Colbert-Wilson says he and everybody else who was a part of that war were "just doing what we were told."

Further complicating matters was the lack of information regarding antiwar sentiments in the country at the time and the lack of things like the internet, which allows soldiers now to have some type of an idea as to the feelings of the population before they return home.

"All of us in the plane were expecting flags and a parade when we got home, and that wasn't what happened at all. We were ducking and running for our lives again."

Colbert-Wilson says he still holds some resentment for the way he was treated all those years ago, and that, too, is a feeling that likely won't ever go away.

Colbert-Wilson says he still has respect for the Vietnamese people but he has none for the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese forces he battled during that time.

"The Viet Cong were sneaky. You'd have guys that would step on poisonous spike

stakes. You'd have guys that would be talking to you and the next thing you know, half of their head is missing or they have a hole in their chest or be missing an arm. I still have sleepless nights and nightmares thinking about that."

Colbert-Wilson says he thought that he and his fellow soldiers were doing the country a service but that "we lost that war." He also says the failures of Presidents Nixon and Johnson had a lot to do with why the U.S. lost the Vietnam War. Seeing the Viet Cong take South Vietnam shortly after American forces left makes him feel that we left a lot of things unfinished in Vietnam.

The years adjusting to life after the war haven't been easy on Colbert-Wilson. An abusive stepfather led to his mother sending him away, which ultimately led to his participation in the Vietnam War. Life after the war has been riddled with numerous job losses and six failed marriages over the years.

Colbert-Wilson also adds that he doesn't blame his mother for anything that happened in the years leading up to his participation in the war.

And he's grateful that attitudes toward military service have changed. Unlike the reception he got when he came home from the war, people these days frequently thank him for his service when they see him wearing a "Vietnam Veteran" hat.

WHAT'S HAPPENING

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 6 Prairie City Senior Center reopening

• Noon, Prairie City Senior Center, 204 N. McHaley St.
The Prairie City Senior Center is reopening for group dining. Lunch will be served at noon on Wednesdays. The cost is \$6 for those under 60, with a suggested donation of \$5 for those 60 and up. For more information, call 541-820-4100.

THURSDAY, APRIL 7 911 Intergovernmental Council

• 6 p.m., John Day Fire Hall, 316 S. Canyon Blvd.
The Grant County Emergency Communications Agency Intergovernmental Council will meet to dis-



cuss various topics, including an independent accounting review, COVID update, dispatch radio console upgrades and a dispatch office expansion. The meeting is open to the public.

FRIDAY, APRIL 8 '62 Days planning meeting

• 7 p.m., Sel's Brewery, 113 Washington St., Canyon City
Regular weekly meeting of the Whiskey Gulch Gang to plan this year's '62 Days fes-

tivities. Anyone who wants to help is welcome. For more information, call Colby Farrel at 541-620-0874.

MONDAY, APRIL 11 Bingo night

• 6 p.m., John Day Elks Lodge, 140 NE Dayton St., John Day

A fundraiser for the Grant Union High School Class of 2026. Dinner provided by the Elks Club at 6 p.m., with bingo starting at 6:30. The cost to play is \$5 per card.

FRIDAY, APRIL 15 '62 Days planning meeting

• 7 p.m., Sel's Brewery, 113 Washington St., Canyon City
Regular weekly meeting of

the Whiskey Gulch Gang to plan this year's '62 Days festivities. Anyone who wants to help is welcome. For more information, call Colby Farrel at 541-620-0874.

SUNDAY, April 17 Easter sunrise service

• 6:30 a.m., Crisp Heights, Southwest Fourth Avenue,

John Day

A sunrise service to celebrate Easter. For more information, call 541-575-5840.

Do you have a community event in Grant County you'd like to publicize? Email information to editor@bmeagle.com. The deadline is noon Friday for publication the following Wednesday.

It's Spring!

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Sat & Sun	1:00, 4:00, 7:00
Mon-Thurs	7:00

THE LOST CITY (PG-13)

Friday	4:10, 7:10
Sat & Sun	1:10, 4:10, 7:10
Mon-Thurs	7:10

MORBIUS (PG-13)

Friday	4:20, 7:20
Sat & Sun	1:20, 4:20, 7:20
Mon-Thurs	7:20

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