

# County's COVID deaths climb to 24

The Columbia Press

The number of deaths in Clatsop County attributed to COVID-19 has climbed to 24.

The latest deaths – three reported on Wednesday – include an 83-year-old woman who died Sept. 2 at her home, an 87-year-old man who died Aug. 26 at a local hospital, and a 49-year-old man who died Sept. 3 at a hospital in Portland.

Just prior to the Labor Day weekend, the state attributed 10 deaths from throughout the month of August to Clatsop. Those who died ranged in age from a 44-year-old man to a 97-year-old woman and all but three died in their homes.

Reporting delays may be related to how death certificates are processed by the state, county health officials said.

There was some good news to report in the local battle against the pandemic.

Clatsop County finally hit the 60 percent mark for vaccinated residents.

“As of Aug. 31, 23,745 county residents had received at least one dose of vaccine,” county health officials announced.

Clatsop County's vaccination rate places it 10th among the state's 36 counties, which have rates ranging from 67 percent to 33 percent. The overall statewide vaccination rate is 61.2 percent.

Breaking down the numbers further, 68 percent of the local eligible population age 12 and over is vaccinated, according to the county.

The reality, however, is that every third person one passes in the local grocery store aisle is likely to be unvaccinated.

With the surge of COVID-19 cases linked to the Delta variant, local vaccination rates

have seen a modest rebound, climbing from less than 200 people per week in July to more than 400 the week ending Aug. 27.

Local vaccination rates are highest among senior residents – 85 percent of county residents age 60 and older have been vaccinated.

## Biodigester proposed in county

Some of the \$7.8 million headed to Clatsop County in the third round of funding from the American Rescue Plan Act could be used to conduct a study for the feasibility of building an anerobic biodigester – a big machine that would break down organic matter from things like septic tanks and food waste.

The biodigester would address the ongoing issue of high-strength organic material that's posing a strain on existing wastewater treatment facilities. Warrenton's system has been one of the few to accept the waste, but has had to turn away septic haulers and

The lowest rate is among youth ages 12 to 17, who did not become eligible for vaccination until the Pfizer vaccine was approved for minors in May. Clatsop County's rate for vaccinated 12- to 17-year-olds is 43 percent, well below the state average of 56 percent.

others as its treatment plant runs out of space.

County commissioners on Wednesday reviewed a list of items for which staff and a stakeholder group propose using the money. The digester study would get an additional \$25,000.

Other funding proposals: child care initiatives, \$70,000; mental health crisis response, \$120,000; mental health services at the county jail, \$350,000 over the next four years; rural health care in Jewell/Mist, \$225,000 over the next four years; \$150,000 for affordable housing grants.



Bruce Dustin

Juanantonio Salcedo, Ryker Thornton and Chelsea Anderson are filling three new teaching positions at Warrenton Middle School.

## Teachers: All are WHS alums

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and technology. His inspiration to teach and coach is Ian O'Brien.

Salcedo emphasized the importance of the Antonio in his first name.

“He was my grandfather,” he said. “He was always root-

ing for me, wishing the best for me. He'll be looking over my shoulder.”

Antonio Avelar died last year from complications of the coronavirus.

Welcome back Ryker, Chelsea, and Juanantonio.

The 2021-22 school year began Tuesday.

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