

# Hermiston Herald

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## UPDATES

Confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Umatilla County: **5**  
Morrow County: **1**  
Oregon: **690**  
United States: **180,000+**  
Oregon deaths: **18**  
U.S. deaths: **3,700+**

If you have symptoms of COVID-19 such as coughing, fever and shortness of breath, call your primary care provider for guidance before showing up to a hospital or medical clinic. For emergencies, call 911. For questions about COVID-19, dial 211.

## BY THE WAY

### Blood drives announced

The blood drive scheduled for April 3 at the **Hermiston VFW hall** has been moved to the **First Christian Church**, 775 W. Highland Ave., Hermiston. The event will take place from 10:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., as previously planned.

The **American Red Cross** is setting a goal of at least 18 pints. In order to meet their goal, it's estimated that 25-30 appointments should be scheduled to cover donor disqualifications or no-shows.

**Hermiston Parks and Recreation** also announced blood drives at the **Hermiston Community Center**, 415 S Highway 395, on April 15 from 12:30-5:30 p.m. and April 16 from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Contact james.martinez@redcross.org or 509-713-4430 for more information or to set up an appointment to donate, or schedule an appointment online at [www.redcross-blood.org](http://www.redcross-blood.org).

According to the American Red Cross, healthy donors are desperately needed to provide lifesaving blood to patients. There is a severe shortage due to the cancellation of numerous collection events because of COVID-19. Eligible blood donors must be at least 16 years old, weigh a minimum of 110 pounds and be in good health at the time of the donation.

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Staff photo by Jade McDowell

**Hermiston School District will hand out Chromebooks Thursday to families that still need digital devices to learn from home during the school closure, which the Oregon Department of Education said Monday may last the entire school year.**

## Remote learning, telephone counseling sessions among many changes

By **JADE MCDOWELL AND ALEX CASTLE**  
STAFF WRITERS

As the country faces unprecedented challenges, local institutions are forging ahead the best they can.

On Monday night, the Oregon Department of Education announced what many Oregonians already suspected: There is a good chance that students are not going to be returning to a physical classroom for the rest of the school year.

State superintendent Colt Gill sent superintendents across the state a 30-page packet of information meant to help guide districts regarding a "Distance Learning for All" effort statewide to set up each child in the state to continue their education outside a brick and mortar classroom.

"Of course, education without face-to-face interaction between students and teachers will look and feel different and cannot be fully replicated across a distance," he wrote. "It will not and cannot happen overnight. We need the grace and patience of our state's leaders, our communities, our families, and our educators as we learn together to move powerfully to ensure care, connection, and continuity of learning happen in entirely new ways for our students."

Hermiston School District was already moving in that direction Monday afternoon. The district checked out about 510 Chromebooks to students who needed electronic devices to access distance learning opportunities. In a letter to parents, Superintendent Tricia Mooney said that the devices are only half the battle — the district must now work with internet providers to find a way to provide internet access to students who don't currently



HH file photo

**Lifeways is now offering appointments via telephone and telehealth technology to ensure that people can still receive mental health services even if they are isolating themselves at home.**

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have it at home.

The district is also handing out paper packets of learning materials as staff hand out lunches every day on buses that stop around town. Mooney said quickly building a district-wide distance learning pro-

gram from scratch will not be easy, but the district is committed to offering all students the best education possible under the circumstances.

"It will not be perfect; while every effort is being made to provide a rich learning opportunity to our students, we also recognize that remote, at-home learning does not replace the experience of a student engaging with the teacher and their peers in the classroom," she said. "We will do our best to create a thoughtful and meaningful experience for our students."

The district announced Tuesday

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# Love in a time of COVID-19

By **JADE MCDOWELL**  
NEWS EDITOR

It seems unimaginable that just a few weeks ago, details like the color of the napkins or flavor of the cake seemed important for a wedding.

Now, with the world on lockdown, couples are struggling to get married at all.

"When we got our license before all this craziness started, we had no idea it was going to get as bad as it has," Stacie Ketchum of Hermiston said.

She and her fiancé Michael Borgaard had planned an intimate wedding with family and a few close friends for April. They got their marriage license, good for 60 days, on

March 2, more than a week before Gov. Kate Brown banned gatherings of more than 250 people.

Now, with even a small gathering out of the question, the couple is trying to decide whether to invite everyone to watch them get married over video chat, or to postpone the wedding, let their license expire and apply for a new one at some unknown future date when people feel comfortable traveling and gathering again.

"I haven't been able to get ahold of anyone at the courthouse to ask about extending our license," Ketchum said.

Some counties aren't even issuing marriage licenses right now, with their courthouses on lockdown. The Umatilla County records department has posted a notice online that mar-

riage licenses are available if a couple pre-applies online and then calls to make an appointment to sign it.

Ketchum said the plan had been for her dad to marry them, so now she is researching if it would be possible for him to marry the pair over video chat, with friends bearing digital witness, and then mail the certificate for the needed signatures.

April Torres-Wittmeyer, who graduated from Hermiston High School in 2002 and now lives in Gresham, also ran into marriage license problems. She and her fiancé have canceled their big destination wedding on the beaches of Maui, but plan to still get married on May 11

*"I HAVEN'T BEEN ABLE TO GET A HOLD OF ANYONE AT THE COURTHOUSE TO ASK ABOUT EXTENDING OUR LICENSE."*

Stacie Ketchum, who had planned an April wedding with family and friends. She and her fiancé are considering an online ceremony.

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