

EDITOR'S DESK

# Let's handle reopening right

Local retailers, salons and bars rejoiced Friday after reopening for the first time in 67 days.

However much people may have missed getting a haircut or a drink, business owners and their employees were hit harder by the shutdown than mere inconvenience.

Last week, I spoke of supporting businesses that had closed. This week, let's talk about what we can do to help them as they reopen.

The most important thing that everyone in our community can do is to help Umatilla and Morrow counties reduce the spread of COVID-19.

The state's plan for reopening, crafted by public health experts, includes moving counties through a series of phases. To move on to a new phase, a county must see declining numbers of confirmed COVID-19 cases, declining numbers of hospitalizations for respiratory illnesses and sufficient hospital capacity to handle an increase. If a county sees a surge in cases, it can be bumped back down to a lower phase or complete closure.

Moving into Phase One does not mean that COVID-19 is not still circulating in our community. It means



Jade McDowell  
NEWS EDITOR



Staff photo by Ben Lonergan

A sign in front of Nookie's Restaurant and Brewery in Hermiston advertises that the restaurant is open for business.

that if you get it, the county now has the means to contact everyone who you exposed to the virus before you knew you had it, and local hospitals will have a bed for you if you're one of the people who gets really sick.

It also means that if you decide to hold a barbecue to celebrate your child's graduation, and the next day you start feeling sick, and it turns out you had COVID-19 and passed it on to several guests, and some of them passed it on to their families, and now two of those people are in

the hospital, your actions may lead to businesses across the entire county having to close again.

You may not like that idea, and you may not agree that's how it should be handled, but that's the reality we live in.

Now is the time for us to be considerate members of society by doing our part to stop the spread of COVID-19 as we begin to be able to reopen parts of the economy. That means following guidelines put in place for our safety, including stay-

ing 6 feet apart, wearing a mask in public, washing our hands frequently, staying home if we have a cough and continuing to reduce the number of people we are in contact with.

It's not fun, but it will save lives. And don't bother telling me that some lives don't matter as much because they're over the age of 60 or have an underlying condition like heart disease.

Some of those people who are at high risk for complications from COVID-19 are now put in a difficult position as their workplaces reopen. A rallying cry for those pushing for reopening is "If you're scared, stay home," but not everyone can work from home. And those with underlying health conditions, like diabetes, are often the least able to quit their jobs because they need the health insurance provided by their employer to cover the exorbitant cost of insulin and other treatments.

So when you're out and about, remember that while you may be celebrating the chance to get a manicure or sit down at a restaurant, the person serving you is putting their health at risk to do so. They may be scared, but feel unable to stay home. So be polite. Don't whine about rules you don't like. Give others plenty of personal space. Tip well. And consider ordering your food to go.

We're not out of the woods yet.

COLUMN

## Answers are available for businesses in need of help

Many business owners have applied for or received funds from the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) and/or Economic Injury Disaster Loan (EIDL). We have received the following questions and want to share information we hope will be helpful.

**I have applied for the EIDL or the PPP and have heard nothing back yet. What do I do?**

You may call the customer service line, but be aware there are long wait times. The number is 800-659-2955. For questions regarding PPP applications you may try contacting your lender. Unfortunately, you may just have to wait, as there are tens of thousands of applications, limited staff and amounts of money.

**I did not apply during the first go-round of applications for the EIDL. Can I apply now?**

At this time, the EIDL is accepting applications only from agricultural businesses. Keep monitoring the website to see when (and if) they open it up again to other businesses.

**I applied during the first round of funding but did not hear anything from SBA. Do I need to reapply?**

No. Existing applications will be processed on a first come, first-served basis.

**I have applied for the EIDL and**

**the loan amount I have received requires collateral. I already have assets mortgaged or with a UCC filing. Do I still qualify for the loan?**

Yes, the SBA will take a subordinate position and if there is no collateral available, borrowers will not be denied the loan.

**I heard the maximum EIDL loan has been decreased. Is this true?**

Yes, the most current information we have is that the maximum loan amount for the EIDL has been reduced to \$150,000.

**I received no notification from the EIDL regarding the loan advance (grant), but the money just showed up in my account. Is this normal?**

Yes. They are just depositing the loan advance into your account so monitor it frequently.

**I obtained a PPP loan and want to hire back my employees. However, they are collecting more on unemployment and do not want to return. What should I do?**

Those collecting unemployment who turn down work stand a strong chance of losing their benefits except under certain circumstances. As long as you have documented their refusal to return to work you should not be penalized and can hire new employees to meet the required 75% threshold for loan forgiveness.

**I have not received either the PPP or EIDL and am self-employed. Can I apply for unemployment?**

Yes. Under the new Pandemic Unemployment Insurance Program (PUA), those who are self-employed, are independent contractors or "gig workers" can apply for unemployment benefits. Visit [www.workinginoregon.org](http://www.workinginoregon.org) and click the Cares Act link in the yellow banner at the top of the page to learn about the program and to apply.

**What documentation does the PUA require to apply?**

You are not required to provide documentation at the time of application, but will complete and sign a certification stating the information you provided is true and correct. However, in case your application is reviewed, you will need to have proof of your income. This would include your tax return, 1099s, etc.

**As the economy opens, where can I find information on the guidelines required for my business?**

Visit <https://govstatus.egov.com/or-covid-19>. It will provide you all the latest information specific to your business. We will continue to provide business owners the most up to date information we have and are here to assist you.

*Greg Smith is the executive advisor of the Umatilla Electric Cooperative Business Resource Center located at 1475 N. First St., in Hermiston. To contact the center for free, confidential advice on applying for aid call 541-289-3000 or email [uecbrc@gmail.com](mailto:uecbrc@gmail.com).*



Greg Smith

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

A funny story

Somehow I got some of that bright pink road paint on the side of my truck and stopped by Rogers Toyota to see if they could tell me what to use to remove it. The gentleman in the service department came over and took a look at it and all of a sudden I noticed him scratching it and off came the paint.

Oh well, modern chemicals aren't always the answer, and I gave the guys in the service department a good laugh.

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CORRECTIONS

It is the policy of the Hermiston Herald to correct errors as soon as they are discovered. Incorrect information will be corrected on Page 2A. Errors committed on the Opinion page will be corrected on that page. Corrections also are noted in the online versions of our stories.

Please contact the editor at [editor@hermistonherald.com](mailto:editor@hermistonherald.com) or call (541) 564-4533 with issues about this policy or to report errors.

SUBMIT A LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Letters Policy: Letters to the Editor is a forum for the Hermiston Herald readers to express themselves on local, state, national or world issues. Brevity is good, but longer letters should be kept to 250 words.

No personal attacks; challenge the opinion, not the person. The Hermiston Herald reserves the right to edit letters for length and for content.

Letters must be original and signed by the writer or writers. Anonymous letters will not be printed. Writers should include a telephone number so they can be reached for questions. Only the letter writer's name and city of residence will be published.

OBITUARY POLICY

The Hermiston Herald publishes paid obituaries. The obituary can include small photos and, for veterans, a flag symbol at no charge. Expanded death notices will be published at no charge. These include information about services. Obituaries may be edited for spelling, proper punctuation and style.

Obituaries and notices may be submitted online at [hermistonherald.com/obituaryform](http://hermistonherald.com/obituaryform), by email to [obits@hermistonherald.com](mailto:obits@hermistonherald.com), by fax to 541-276-8314, placed via the funeral home or in person at the Hermiston Herald or East Oregonian offices. For more information, call 541-966-0818 or 1-800-522-0255, x221.