

# COVID-19 cases reach 2,188 in Umatilla County

By JADE MCDOWELL  
NEWS EDITOR

Umatilla County's new COVID-19 cases are still high compared to the rest of the state, but increasing less rapidly.

On Tuesday, Aug. 11, the county had announced 27 new confirmed cases of COVID-19, bringing the county's total to 2,188 since the pandemic began — an increase in 183 confirmed cases from the Tuesday prior.

Deaths announced over the past week between Aug. 4-11 included a 76-year-old man who tested positive July 17 and died Aug. 10 at Good Shepherd Medical Center; an 85-year-old woman who died at Kadlec Regional Medical Center; an 83-year-old man who died at Good

Shepherd Medical Center; and a 71-year-old woman, a 93-year-old woman and 94-year-old man who all died at Regency Hermiston Nursing and Rehabilitation Center.

According to an Aug. 5 report from the Oregon Health Authority, Regency had 80 cases of COVID-19 linked to its facility through residents, staff or close contacts of staff getting sick.

Umatilla County also announced its youngest death so far, a 47-year-old man who died July 14 at his residence. While it can be complicated in elderly patients to determine the relationship between COVID-19, the individual's underlying conditions and their death after their diagnosis, the news release from Umatilla County announc-

ing the 47-year-old's death specifically noted that "the death certificate listed COVID-19 disease or SARS-CoV-2, as a cause of death or as a significant condition that contributed to his death."

Morrow County announced its third death so far of an individual with COVID-19 — an 85-year-old female resident who died at an out-of-state hospital on July 21.

"This is an incredibly sad announcement and we encourage everyone to be respectful as a family in our community grieves," the news release from the county stated. "If you are in need of support during this difficult time, please contact Community Counseling Solutions at 541-676-9161." Options for COVID-

19 testing are available throughout Umatilla County, including local medical clinics, such as Family Health Associates.

Jolene Horning, practice manager at Family Health Associates in Hermiston, said when a patient calls with any symptoms or exposure to COVID-19, the office schedules a telehealth visit. If the provider who speaks with them during the call recommends that the person be tested, they can drive to the office for a curbside test.

The virtual chats and drive-up testing reduce the amount of exposure within Family Health Associates' offices at the Good Shepherd Health Care System plaza and their satellite clinic in Umatilla. Horning said they introduced tele-

medicine this spring and have conducted 3,000 telehealth visits so far.

She said insurance providers seem to be covering 100% of the cost of the test in most cases, and the samples collected are sent to Interpath for testing.

"We were getting a 24-hour turnaround (on results) but with the outbreaks in places like Florida and Texas supplies ran low, and now it's been more like 72 hours," she said on July 31.

The Oregon Health Authority releases a weekly report on worksite outbreaks of COVID-19, defined as workplaces with more than 30 employees that have had at least five cases linked to the workplace.

Lamb Weston remained in one of the top spots on

the workplace list with 167 cases linked to its Hermiston plant between June 16 and July 18. But the company's Boardman facilities are now reporting outbreaks as well. OHA's weekly report for Aug. 5 lists 31 cases at its Lamb Weston East site, 22 cases at its Lamb Weston Boardman Pac Center and 21 cases at Lamb Weston West.

Shelby Stoolman, a spokeswoman for the company, said in an email on Aug. 5 that so far the Boardman sites had not been shut down and a mass testing event has not been planned — both of which happened at the Hermiston site in July.

"We're closely monitoring the cases and sharing information with OHA, and we'll adjust our approach if needed," she said.

## Hermiston Herald to distribute masks



Staff photos by Ben Lonergan

At left, Summer Wildbill folds masks in preparation for insertion into the Wednesday, Aug. 12, edition of the Hermiston Herald at the offices of the East Oregonian in Pendleton on Aug. 11. The mask distribution, a partnership between the Hermiston Herald and Umatilla County, will distribute roughly 15,000 masks across Hermiston and the surrounding area. Above, Lindsey Pasemalittlesky inserts folded masks into packets of COVID-19 information.

## Four candidates running for Hermiston City Council so far

By JADE MCDOWELL  
NEWS EDITOR

Three incumbents and one newcomer are in the running so far for four seats on the Hermiston City Council.

Candidates for the four, at-large positions on the council have until Aug. 25 at 5 p.m. to file for candidacy. All candidates who filed will appear on the November 2020 general election ballot, and the top four vote-getters will take office in January 2021.

Nancy Peterson, an accessibility specialist for Columbia Basin College, is running for the first time, but she said it has been a dream of hers to run for office since she was a teenager licking the stamps to help candidates that her parents were supporting. She said she is now in a place in her life where she feels prepared to serve.

Peterson has lived in Hermiston for 11 years and the Umatilla/Morrow County area for 20 years, she said, and she hopes to focus on listening to community members' concerns and helping the city understand their needs.

"If people don't feel heard, they're not going to listen," she said.



Primmer



Peterson



Hardin

Rod Hardin has a l r e a d y served 28 years on the city council and said he considered not running

again. But previous health problems he had been facing have been resolved, he said, and his retirement as principal of Hermiston Christian Center has given him more time to devote to the city, so he decided he can put

his experience to use on the council for what he believes will likely be his last term.

"I guess I'm not ready to give it up yet, if the public will let me," he said.

Hardin said he is proud of the decisions the council has made over the past three decades that have gotten Hermiston to where it is today, from building the Regional Water System to buying the electric utility that is now Hermiston Energy Services. He has served on various commit-

tees over his years of service, but said he has always stuck with the Public Safety Committee because it is a topic he is passionate about.

Doug Primmer is running for a third term, and said his motivations are the same as the first time he ran.

"I'm still trying to make a difference," he said. "Like I said when I first started, the world is run by those who show up."

Primmer grew up in Hermiston and has had a career in law enforcement and corrections, including more than 30 years as a rescue diver with the Umatilla County Sheriff's Office. His brother, Dale Primmer, is a Pendleton city councilor.

Manuel Gutierrez currently holds one of the at-large seats on the council, but said he doesn't plan to run again.

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