

**Freeze:**

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“It’s not only for our business, but also our employees and their families.”

Hair stylists and nail salon owners could breathe a sigh of relief that they weren’t included in this round of shutdowns. Shawn Massey, owner of Styling Arena and Gift Boutique in Hermiston, said they won’t have to cancel appointments this time around.

“We’re sending mass emails to our clients, to let them know we are still open, and that we’re doing things to be able to stay open and keep everyone healthy,” she said.

On the boutique side of the business, however, the shop is limited to 75% capacity. Massey said that restriction comes at a bad time, as retailers were just planning for Black Friday, Small Business Saturday and general holiday shopping. Still, she said she’s grateful they will still be able to have customers come in to shop.

“You just have to change everything,” she said. “Your holiday events have to go longer, and stretch them out, so fewer people are in the store at a time.”

She said usually they have an evening shopping party to kick off the holiday season, but this year customers should look out for deals spread out over several days so that not everyone is in the store at once.

**Rising cases triggered restrictions**

Prior to the governor’s announcement of the two-week freeze, Umatilla County Public Health Director Joe Fiumara said on Nov. 12 that the local rise in cases has been directly linked to at least “five or six” large social gatherings of 30 or more, and at times 50 or more people, that were hosted around or after Halloween.

Fiumara said a significant portion of these cases have been diagnosed in young adults and teens — county data showed nearly 55% of the county’s total

**“PARENTS: PLEASE HELP PREVENT THE SPREAD OF COVID-19 BY ENSURING THAT YOUR TEEN IS NOT OUT PARTYING. WE ARE AWARE OF ONE OR MORE LARGE PARTIES PLANNED IN OUR AREA FOR THE UPCOMING WEEKEND. PLEASE ENSURE THAT YOUR TEEN IS NOT IN ATTENDANCE.”**

Pendleton School District officials, in an email sent to parents this week

cases have been among people 39 or younger as of Nov. 13 — and the health department is pleading with parents and the community to prevent these gatherings from happening.

“Parents: please help prevent the spread of COVID-19 by ensuring that your teen is not out partying,” an email sent by the health department to parents with students in the Pendleton School District stated this week. “We are aware of one or more large parties planned in our area for the upcoming weekend.

Please ensure that your teen is not in attendance.”

Fiumara said those attending the parties have also been unwilling to share information with the health department during contact tracing and it’s hindering the local response.

In one instance, Fiumara said an entire household was diagnosed with the virus and had recently attended a birthday party of at least 25 people but wouldn’t share information about other attendees who may have been exposed.

“We have many instances of items like that happening, which make it confusing for us to know how many of these are the same party or how many are different,” he said.

State Epidemiologist Dean Sidelinger said Nov. 13 that the vast majority of cases statewide have also been linked to social gatherings, and the state has directed counties to prioritize contact tracing for the most at-risk individuals when necessary due to the difficulty in tracking cases associated with them.

Younger individuals are generally more healthy and less likely to be hospitalized or suffer severe symptoms of COVID-19, but Fiumara said there’s still risk of spreading to other more at-risk individuals and the numbers will continue to keep schools and businesses under restrictions.

“The real concern is who they’re going to bring it home to,” Fiumara said. “If they have a place of employment, who are they going to bring it to at work, who are they going to interact with in the community, and all of that really just pushes the spread up.”

As the entire state enters another period of lockdowns trying to slow the virus’s spread, Fiumara said it’s “disheartening and frustrating” to have their local efforts impacted by those who continue to flout the guidelines in place to protect the community.

“We get it, people hate some of these restrictions,” he said. “But man, this is like the worst thing we could be doing.”



Ben Lonergan/Hermiston Herald

**A sign directs visitors at the Good Shepherd Health Care System campus in Hermiston on Monday, Nov. 16, 2020.**

**Hospital:**

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he said the hospital is still turning over information to the Oregon Health Authority and Umatilla County Public Health so those contact tracers can work on notifying employees who were in contact with the sick person. He said so far contact tracers have not found any cases where a patient appeared to have contracted COVID-19 from an employee.

Right now, Patrick said the best thing people can do to help health care workers is to take precautions recommended by the medical community at large, including wearing a mask when around non-household members, washing hands frequently, sanitizing surfaces and social distancing. The community is seeing a lot of spread from young people with mild symptoms exposing more vulnerable people to the virus, he said.

“It doesn’t cost a person to be vigilant,” he said. “They don’t have to be in a panic state, but they should be vigilant.”

He said there is light at the end of the tunnel with two vaccines that have been announced where trials are showing far higher effectiveness rates than the goal of 70% that had initially been hoped for. Good Shepherd, along with other hospitals and public health agencies, has put together a task force that is writing plans to distribute the vaccines as quickly as possible once they are available, first to health care workers and those with the highest

risk of complications, and then eventually to the general public.

He said he feels confident in the vaccines coming out.

“I think it’s gonna be interesting to see how many people want to get vaccinated because there’s a little fear of how quickly they worked through the process,” he said. “But I think the process went fast mostly because the red tape was taken out of the way and it was a team effort. I don’t think they’re cutting any corners.”

Sims said first people need to be vigilant to get through the winter, however — as difficult as it may be to make the sacrifice to stay “cooped up.”

“If we’re told we need to keep our groups down to six or less, we need to do that because I believe that the governor’s being given data that supports that,” he said. “There’s a reason that the direction being given is what it is right now.”

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