

State, county add vaccination incentives

COVID-19 restrictions could lift by June 21 if enough people get shots

By GARY A. WARNER AND BRYCE DOLE
EO MEDIA GROUP

Nearly all COVID-19 restrictions could be lifted in as early as just over two weeks, Gov. Kate Brown said Friday, June 4.

The state was about 127,000 adults short of the goal of getting at least one shot of vaccine into 70% of eligible residents as of Friday.

Once the state crosses the threshold, Brown said she would lift masking, business capacity, event size, social distance and other limits that Oregonians have dealt with for more than a year.

“We can fully reopen — we can

all look forward to that,” she said.

Local health officials would then take over the daily decision making and operations in counties from the Oregon Health Authority.

Brown said even very large events, such as the Pendleton Round-Up in September, would be good to go once the state hits its target vaccination rate.

Oregon’s statewide mark stood at 66.8% on June 6, although some counties are far lower. In Umatilla County, which still has high enough COVID-19 numbers to currently keep it in high risk status, just 38% of residents over age 16 have received at least one shot,

according to OHA recordkeeping.

OHA Director Pat Allen said that if the current pace continues, the statewide mark of 70% would be hit about June 21.

Most restrictions, including asking Oregonians to wear a mask in public spaces if they can’t provide proof of vaccination, are expected to go away, although some rules for schools and the workplace will remain for the time being.

Brown also reiterated plans to give away \$1 million to a vaccinated Oregonian, along with \$10,000 to a vaccinated person in

See Vaccines, Page A8



Ben Lonergan/Hermiston Herald, File

After an initial morning rush, lines sit empty at a Umatilla County Public Health mass COVID-19 vaccination site in Pendleton on April 30, 2021. The county is rolling out the “Community Rewards Program” to incentivize vaccinations.

UPDATES

Umatilla County remains in high risk

HERMISTON HERALD

Umatilla County will remain in the high risk category for COVID-19 for at least another week, according to the updated categories released by Gov. Kate Brown on Tuesday, June 9.

The county is one of 11 in the high risk category. There are now 21 counties in low risk and four in moderate risk.

Risk levels are based on a county’s COVID-19 cases per capita and test positivity rate. According to Oregon Health Authority, Umatilla County’s rate of tests coming back positive on June 6 was 7.8%, compared to 3.1% statewide.

In counties under high risk, establishments such as restaurants, gyms, museums, theaters and churches are only allowed to operate at 25% capacity or risk fines from OSHA.

Retail stores are capped at 50% capacity. Indoor social gatherings are capped at six people.

Morrow County is in the low risk category. Under low risk, restaurants and gyms can operate at 50% capacity and retail stores at 75%. Indoor social gatherings are capped at 10 people.

Brown has promised that the restrictions based on risk level will go away once 70% of Oregonians over age 18 have been vaccinated against COVID-19.

“But, for unvaccinated individuals, COVID-19 remains as large a threat as it ever was,” she said in a news release. “With more contagious variants spreading, far too many Oregonians are still being hospitalized when they could be protected with a vaccine. If you have been waiting to get vaccinated, go get your shot today. It’s never been easier to get an appointment, and you may just win \$1 million through the Take Your Shot, Oregon campaign.”



Ben Lonergan/Hermiston Herald

Graduates wait in line before crossing their stage at the Hermiston High School commencement ceremony on Thursday, June 3, 2021.

Taking the next step



Ben Lonergan/Hermiston Herald

Graduates parade through the hallways at Hermiston High School before speeches and walking across the stage to collect their diplomas at the high school’s commencement ceremony on Thursday, June 3, 2021.



Ben Lonergan/Hermiston Herald

Ella Hagel gives a farewell address to graduates before leading the turning of the tassels at Hermiston High School’s commencement ceremony on Thursday, June 3, 2021.

After graduation, Class of 2021 takes a moment to reflect

By JADE MCDOWELL
NEWS EDITOR

As they walked out the door of Hermiston High School for the last time, there were mixed emotions from the Class of 2021.

Some were grinning as they left the graduation ceremony at the high school on Thursday, June 3. Others got a bit teary-eyed as they hugged friends and family. While many said they were glad to be leaving behind a difficult school year, most could find good memories of high school, too.

Angel Barron said his favorite memory was winning the state football championship his freshman year.

“It was really cold, but otherwise really cool,” he said.

The Bulldogs took home the Oregon 5A title in November 2017, going out on top as they headed to the Mid-Columbia Conference to compete against Washington schools.

Now, Barron heads to Blue Mountain Community College to study criminal justice.

William Kern’s best memory also was from his first year of

MORE INSIDE

For photos from Umatilla, Stanfield and Echo graduations, see Page A7. For full photo galleries from all graduation ceremonies, see www.hermistonherald.com.

high school, when he and the rest of the cast took their bows at the end of the musical “Seussical.”

Theater and choir were highlights for him the rest of his high school career, and after playing Horton he went on to play other lead roles, including the Scarecrow in “The Wizard of Oz.”

Now, he plans to start out at BMCC before eventually transferring to a four-year university to finish up a bachelor’s degree in business.

“I’ll save some money at home,” he said.

Gilberto Avila said the thing he will miss most about high school is the freedom from adult responsibilities that he knows are waiting for him on the other side. He said he plans to go to a four year university but he’s not sure where yet.

See Graduates, Page A8

INSIDE

A2 ▶ Three Minutes with Sally Anderson Hansell

A3 ▶ Hermiston’s Veterans of Foreign Wars post has its charter revoked

A3 ▶ Funeral services are set for Umatilla County Sheriff’s Office deputy who drowned

A6 ▶ Oregon Trail Library District is waiving all fees for late books