

Vaccine workers report positive experiences at event booths, clinics

Nurse says she is optimistic about hesitant individuals changing their minds

By ERICK PETERSON
Hermiston Herald

Vaccination booths have been a common feature at local events for months. And while workers at these booths often are idle, and vaccination lines can be short or nonexistent, there are victories to be told.

Alisha Lundgren, Umatilla County Health deputy director, said her office has worked with the Oregon Health Authority and local health providers to coordinate and staff local vaccination booths. The county health department was present with workers at the Umatilla County Fair and the Pendleton Round-up.

She said 34 people were vaccinated at the fair parade alone, and 39 at the fair. During Round-Up week, at the staff booth and the county health department

office, 57 vaccinations were given.

Kori Hibbard is a home visiting nurse with the Nurse-Family Partnership program for Umatilla County. She has staffed booths at the Pendleton Farmers Market as well as local mass drive-thru events and visits to local businesses.

"I can't think of one vaccination event, whether public or private, that I've been to where somebody has been inappropriate or angry or said something (negative)," she said.

She described people at the events as "hopeful," "excited," and "appreciative."

She said she figures she has worked at 20 to 30 vaccination events, including visits to workplaces. She started in February 2021. Generally, her experience at those events has been "positive," she said.

"They're appreciative of us being there," she said.

Getting the vaccine, for many people, has meant being able to see family again and feel safe.



Ben Lonergan/Hermiston Herald, File

Registered nurse Kori Hibbard prepares to administer a dose of the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine to Kari Ferguson, a secretary at Gib Olinger Elementary School in Milton-Freewater, during a vaccination clinic at the Pendleton Convention Center on Jan. 28, 2021.

This response is much different from reports Hibbard has seen in national news. She has heard of ugliness in other places, and she has been concerned it would happen here to her. Though she remains "a little worried," she said, she is happy she has yet to experience harassment or violence.

What she often gets, she said, are people approaching her at events to ask about the numbers of vaccines she has given. She tells them she tends to give around 15 vaccinations during a typical three-hour shift at the Pendleton Farmers Market. This number varies at other events.

She said she has had some

events, when she worked a seven-hour day, and only vaccinated five people.

"I think everyone should get the vaccine," Hibbard said, adding she feels disappointed about people who still do not get it. At the same time, she said she views each vaccination as a victory. While she would like to see hundreds of peo-

ple lining up for it, she still is pleased with each one.

Advertising and word of mouth are key to the best vaccination events, she said. When there are signs, there are more people. Also, when there are incentives, such as food coupons or carnival wristbands, more people get vaccinations.

Hibbard has not given up on unvaccinated people. She said she thinks there still are people who will change their mind. Often, when people change their mind about the vaccine, it is because of personal experiences. They see other people with bad COVID-19 cases or they suffer COVID-19 themselves, and they decide to become vaccinated.

Many people see other people get the vaccine and seem fine, which also is encouraging. She, herself, has never seen a single bad reaction to a vaccine she has given. This makes her confident in the vaccine.

"I think the vaccine should still offer people hope," she said. "It's made me feel safer."

Umatilla, Hermiston schools bring the hammer down on "devious licks"

By ERICK PETERSON
Hermiston Herald

A new trend, which has garnered national attention, has made its way to Umatilla County to concern local school administrators. The trend is called "devious licks," and it involves students videoing themselves committing crimes and then posting those videos to the social media platform TikTok.

Umatilla and Hermiston school districts have experienced minor vandalism associated with the trend. Administrators at those districts are trying to head off the trend with statements discouraging it.

Umatilla

Heidi Sipe, Umatilla School District superintendent, said there was "some vandalism" at Umatilla High School and Clara Brownell Middle School. The most significant of this vandalism, Sipe said, was the removal of a paper towel dispenser from the wall and the lining of soap dispensers.

In response, the school investigated, found the missing equipment, discovered the culprits and turned them over to the police.

"We chose to treat the few cases we had very seriously and didn't have additional damage," Sipe said.

The schools did, however, have students "disrespecting the facilities," by locking bathroom stalls and sliding out from beneath the stall doors. This left the doors locked. There also have been cases of littering in the bathrooms.

"We took a hard line on that behavior as well," Sipe said.

The schools closed some restrooms so the remaining restrooms could be monitored.

Sipe also issued a letter to the district's students and their parents. The letter starts off by explaining the trend and warning of its possible escalation.

"In upcoming months, other 'challenges' involving sexual harassment, physical violence and further theft and vandalism are planned," according to the letter.

The remainder of the letter stated the district's goal is to create a positive environment for students. It also encourages students to report criminal behavior.

In a follow-up email, Sipe called the trend "ridiculous and alarming," and she made a case for why it should be taken seriously.

She stated there have been other trends, such as the "choking game" and "eating Tide pods."

"The key to (stopping) all of these has been open and honest communication with students and setting clear expectations," she said. "When we pretend it won't impact our schools or homes and neglect to discuss these issues with students, they become large issues."

She said she thinks the correct response is to encourage discussion about values and expectations.

"Trends come and go, and this one will too; however, when the adults show students the path expected through the trend, they grow and learn and it becomes part of their development as people, not a detri-

mental aspect of their lives," she said.

She added, "I like to think of the same kids who can say no to a harmful TikTok challenge today as the same adults who can think for themselves and make positive choices as adults tomorrow."

Hermiston

Hermiston schools on the secondary level have suffered devious licks, according to Briana Cortaberria, executive assistant to the superintendent. She said there has been vandalism, such as damage to paper towel dispensers.

The response to this vandalism was like the response in Umatilla, as administrators made comments during school announcements. Bad behavior would not be tolerated, the comments stated, and witnesses should report misdeeds.

The Hermiston School District also delivered a letter to students and their parents. The Hermiston letter, like the Umatilla letter, explained the trend and warned against further damage.

Cortaberria stated, "Consequences will depend on the severity of the infraction."

Such consequences may include detention, suspension, expulsion and referral to law enforcement officials.

The letter also makes its own "challenges" to counter devious licks. Proposed challenges from the school district are to make a positive impact in the community. Students may do such actions as eat lunch with someone new, thank a veteran, compliment someone and volunteer at a local nonprofit.



Ben Lonergan/Hermiston Herald

Students on Oct. 11, 2021, pass through the hallways of Umatilla High School. The Umatilla School District is taking steps to quash "devious licks," a social media trend that involves students videoing themselves vandalizing schools.

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