

First baby of 2022 arrives right on time



Kadlec Regional Medical Center/Contributed Photo
Robby and Lisa Koester pose with newborn Leah on Saturday, Jan. 1, 2022.

Hermiston Herald

Kadlec Regional Medical Center welcomed its first baby of the year on Jan. 1 at 12:01 a.m. The child is Leah Koester, weighing 6 pounds, 2 ounces, at a height of 19.5 inches.

Leah was born to Lisa and Robby Koester of Hermiston. She joins a family that includes Jake, 16, and Reigh, 7.

Commenting on the child, her mother said, "She had to make her grand appearance early."

Meanwhile, the father said they were "starting the year off with a bang."

Where life is snowy and cold!



Ben Lonergan/Hermiston Herald

Snow blankets the town of Hermiston Wednesday, Dec. 29, 2021, along Highway 395 in Hermiston.

Local police arrest two in connection with car theft

Hermiston Herald

Two Keizer residents are in the Umatilla County Jail, Pendleton, after local police arrested them Sunday, Jan. 2, for vehicle theft.

Kenneth Wayne Felton, 25, faces an initial charge of vehicle theft, and Dar-

cie Noel Wetzel-Barnett, 28, faces charges of vehicle theft and felon in possession of a firearm, according to state court records.

Pendleton police in a press release Jan. 3 reported officers at 11:49 a.m. Jan. 2 responded to the Pendleton Walmart on a report of theft of merchandise.

An employee told police a male and a female left the store with a suitcase containing more store property and paid for nothing. The employee gave police the license plate number of the red Hyundai Sonata the pair were in. Police found the car was stolen out of Keizer.

An alert about the car went out to local law enforcement.

A Stanfield police officer at about 12:16 p.m. spotted the car at the Pilot Travel Center, 2115 S. Highway 395, Stanfield.

The officer, with backup from Umatilla County sheriff's depu-

ties, arrested Felton and Wetzel-Barnett.

A Pendleton officer arrived and secured the property from Walmart and added misdemeanor theft charges against the pair. Stanfield police took control of the car.

Police also arrested Wetzel-Barnett on a Marion

County probation violation warrant.

State court records show Wetzel-Barnett has a conviction from 2019 for misdemeanor theft.

Felton has convictions from 2017 and 2021 for vehicle thefts and other crimes in Marion and Hood River counties.

COVID-19 infections rise in Oregon as pandemic moves into Year 3

State officials say they have ordered 12 million at-home test kits

By GARY A. WARNER
Oregon Capital Bureau

Oregon is in the midst of a sixth wave of COVID-19 infections as the world marked the two-year anniversary of the pandemic on Friday, Dec. 31.

The Oregon Health Authority report on Dec. 30 recorded 2,948 new cases and 15 deaths. Hospitalizations for COVID-19 climbed to 440 people, up 21 from Dec. 29.

Oregon has recorded 421,263 infections and 5,655 deaths from COVID-19, which was first reported in China two years ago Dec. 31. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported 488,000 new cases nationwide, a new record. The World Health Organization said new infections were a "tsunami" sweeping the globe.

The Dec. 30 report said the seven-day daily average of new cases in Oregon rose to 1,532. The per capita rate is 251.3 cases per 100,000.

Deschutes County continues to be the state's leading COVID-19 hot spot, with the top infection rate of any county when adjusted for population. Deschutes County has a weekly average of 565.4 cases per 100,000 residents.

Sparsely populated Grant County has a weekly average of 546.8 cases. Umatilla County has the third highest

average, at just more than 402 cases. Crook County is fourth with an average of 337 cases, followed by Jefferson County at 331.9 cases per 100,000.

Sherman County, with fewer than 2,000 residents, has the highest positive test rate at 33.3%, based on a rise from zero to three cases. Umatilla County has the second highest positive test rate at 29.1%, followed by Deschutes at 22.7%, Union at 21.7%, and Tillamook at 19.8%.

The seven-day average of new infections in the U.S. topped 267,000 on Dec. 29, a new record.

Omicron in Eastern Oregon

There has yet to be a verified case of the omicron variant of the coronavirus in Umatilla County, according to Alisha Lundgren, assistant director of Umatilla County Public Health. But she said we can be sure it has moved into Eastern Oregon.

Lundgren on Dec. 30 said up to 13 cases of the variant had been discovered in Oregon to that point.

"That signifies that it is present in our state," she said.

For the variant to be verified, it must be sequenced, though, she said, and researchers do not sequence many cases. Lundgren said, 90% of all new COVID-19 cases can be attributed to omicron in Oregon, Washington and Idaho. This percentage is likely the same in Eastern Oregon, too, she said.

As a result of the variant,

Lundgren said she expects to see more hospitalizations because of how transmissible omicron is, though not necessarily severe cases filling intensive care units.

While omicron is more infectious than other variants, she said, it is potentially less severe than the delta variant. But it will take time to research omicron before its severity is known. She said she expects scientists will have more information in the coming weeks.

In the meantime, she said, people should continue to do the same things they were doing before the onset of omicron, including getting vaccinated, wearing masks, employing social distancing and limiting gatherings.

"I know that a lot of these (actions) are things that we've been talking about since the beginning of the pandemic, so it doesn't seem like anything new, but they are helpful strategies and considerations for individuals and families as more illness starts spreading," she said.

Lundgren added winter weather may trouble our efforts, though, and people gather together indoors.

"This has an impact," she said.

To deal with the danger of omicron in increasing cases, Umatilla County Public Health has made adjustments, according to the assistant director. It has reached out to the Oregon Health Authority for additional support on contact tracing and case investigation. Umatilla County Pub-

lic Health also has tried to interview COVID-19 cases more efficiently.

OHA orders 12 million test kits

The high-speed spread of the omicron variant is driving the spike, along with a stubbornly slow decline of the delta variant that peaked in September.

Omicron now accounts for a majority of new cases in the United States, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Cases are expected to continue to rise in Oregon, with positive test rate at 15% on Dec. 30, which is three times the standard OHA says is a manageable level of spread.

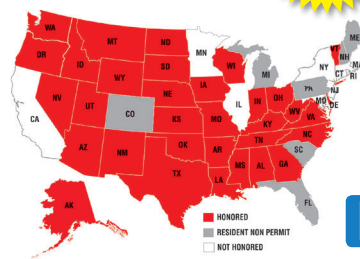
The health authority that day said it had ordered 12 million at-home antigen rapid test kits, which can show results in 15 minutes. Local public health agencies and partner organizations will distribute the tests free of charge. The first kits should arrive in Oregon this week.

"Oregon learned during the delta surge that we must be prepared for the unpredictable — we knew we had to be ready for future variants so we could continue to protect the most vulnerable in our communities while keeping our schools, businesses and communities open," Gov. Kate Brown said in a statement.

Pharmacies around the state have reported selling all available kits and mail orders are backlogged into next month.

CONCEALED CARRY PERMIT CLASS

**SATURDAY
JANUARY 15TH**
**Hermiston
Ranch & Home**



Multi-State \$80
Oregon Included No Fee

Oregon Only \$45

MULTI-STATE

Valid 35-States, including Washington

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A household is defined for the purposes of the Lifeline program as any individual or group of individuals who live together at the same address and share income and expenses. Lifeline service is not transferable, and only eligible consumers may enroll in the program. Consumers who willfully make false statements in order to obtain Lifeline telephone or broadband service can be punished by fine or imprisonment and can be barred from the program.

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City of Umatilla and Umatilla Morrow County Head Start
UMCHS
Umatilla Morrow Head Start, Inc.

Second Annual Coats for Kids

Polar Bear Lunche

GIVEAWAYS FOOD GAMES

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12 PM TO 2 PM

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Donated coats can be dropped off at the Umatilla Head Start at 1371 3rd St.

If your family is in need of winter coats please contact Ms. Rita at 541-969-3338 or rcampos@umchs.org
Questions? Call 541-922-3226x113 or hannah@umatilla-city.org

Ciudad de Umatilla y Umatilla Morrow County Head Start
UMCHS
Umatilla Morrow Head Start, Inc.

Segunda Anual Abrigos para niños

Polar Bear Lunche

REGALOS COMIDA JUEGOS

8 de Enero

UMATILLA MARINA SWIM BEACH
1710 QUINCY AVE
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12 PM a 2 PM

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Los abrigos donados se pueden dejar en el Head Start de Umatilla en 1371 3rd St.

Si su familia necesita abrigos de invierno, póngase en contacto con Ms. Rita en 541-969-3338 o rcampos@umchs.org
Preguntas? 541-922-3226x113 o hannah@umatilla-city.org