



Kathy Aney/Hermiston Herald
Second grader Emily Ramos Corral walks with her class along the hallway at McNary Heights Elementary School in Umatilla on Monday, May 16, 2022. After COVID-19 case numbers fell, fewer of Emily's classmates and teachers wore masks.

SCHOOLS

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Dirk Dirksen, Morrow County School District superintendent, said COVID-19 worries have decreased along with concern. He said there have been no reported cases in Morrow County schools in at least a month and maybe only one or two since February.

"Knock on wood," he said, adding he hopes cases do not reemerge.

As for protocols, he said schools require adults to sign in at an office upon arriving at a school. At that time, they do not have COVID-19 or symptoms.

"We also would ask parents to keep kids at home with any COVID symptoms," he said, and schools send students home if they

have symptoms.

Dirksen said schools are equipped with COVID-19 tests from the state of Oregon and masks are optional for students and staff, both on school grounds and in buses.

He said he has kept an eye on COVID-19 numbers in the district. In recent months, he said, cases are declining throughout Morrow County. The superintendent said it is possible case numbers are higher than what is reported in the school district and throughout the county.

"When kids are home with the flu, we don't call them up and tell them they have to call the health department," he said.

Jake Bacon, Hermiston School District assistant superintendent, said concern about COVID-19 has drastically reduced, and contact tracing is a thing of



Ben Lonergan/Hermiston Herald, file

First-grade students eat a meal at their desks prior to the start of the school day at Washington Elementary School in Pendleton on the first day of in-person instruction on Feb. 22, 2021. With COVID-19 cases rising in May 2022, Oregon officials have asked schools to prioritize in-person learning and monitor spread of disease in their community and absenteeism, offering testing and recommending or even mandating masks before moving to remote learning.

the past. Masks in his district are optional, for both staff and students. This remains the situation both on school grounds and on buses.

There was a COVID-19 case last week, he said, but a lot is unknown as reporting is not mandatory. The district still has recommendations, though.

"An individual who tests positive, they should isolate for five days," he said. After five days, and after 24 hours of being fever free, they should wear masks for days six through 10, he said.

Bacon said cleanings and sterilizations have

decreased in recent weeks, but schools still are wiping down tabletops and promoting hand washing.

The Oregon Health Authority and Oregon Department of Education also reminded schools that students or staff with COVID-like symptoms have to stay home, and asked families to not send their sick children to school and to seek a test and, if the children are eligible, to get them vaccinated.

— Oregon Public Broadcasting reporter Elizabeth Miller and The Oregonian reporter Fedor Zarkhin contributed to this report.



Kathy Aney/Hermiston Herald

A box of face masks sit on the counter in the office at Hermiston High School on Monday, May 16, 2022.



Kathy Aney/Hermiston Herald
Heather Spinden poses with two of her benefactors, Josh Ross and Holly Woods, on Wednesday, May 11, 2022. Ross and Woods have helped mobilize individuals and businesses to make improvements to Spinden's home.

HOME

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the Spindens. Their home had problems, and their homeowner's insurance dropped them last summer.

Suddenly, people wanted to help.

Through contacts, Ross and Woods, along with Academy, started attracting more help. An employee of Ross-Brandt Electric Inc., Ross was able to get his family's company on board with this effort. More people and companies followed, as they posted this work on Facebook, distributed flyers and made phone calls.

Cost Less Carpet donated the flooring, C & C Construction Services Inc. provided much of the roofing and other companies stepped up, too. Ross-

Brandt provided workers, as did some other companies. Jimmy's Johns Portable Toilets Inc., offered its services, and other people gave what they could.

Over \$100,000 was given in donations, including around \$40,000 in cash, Woods said. Enough money was left from donations to pay Heather Spinden's medical bills.

"We didn't expect this," Woods said. She added that the Spindens never asked for this help, but people gave it freely.

Heather Spinden said she has a lot of good feelings about her community because of this work.

"We feel so humbled and blessed," she said. "We're so happy that they've made it so we can enjoy this home, and we're going to enjoy it, one day at a time."

People with HIV are our neighbors.

More than half of Oregonians with HIV live outside Portland, often in suburbs or small towns like this one.

But with today's advances, HIV isn't what it used to be. People with HIV are living longer, healthier lives, with the help of medication. By talking about HIV, we can support our community. Testing and early treatment protect you and your partner. Help is available if you're HIV+. Learn more and find free testing at endhivoregon.org



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