

Five district virus cases; most staff are vaccinated

By **ETHAN MYERS** and **ERICK BENDEL**
The Astorian

The Oregon Health Authority weekly outbreak report last week showed five virus cases from the Seaside School District. Four were students from Pacific Ridge Elementary School and one was a student from Seaside High School.

Seaside Superintendent Susan Penrod said all recorded virus cases up to this point were tied to events outside of school.

Penrod said she is confident in the job schools are doing.

"I feel like things are going really well, especially since none of the cases originated in our buildings and that we don't have any spread in our schools," Penrod said. "With our conversations with the local health authority, they have confirmed to us that our safety protocols are working well."

One virus case was reported at Anchor Christian Academy, a private school in Hammond. School administrators could not immediately be reached for comment.

The Oregon Health Authority has reported more than a dozen new coronavirus cases across schools in Clatsop County as classes resumed for the new school year.

The weekly outbreak report showed four of the 14 cases were from the Astoria School District. Three of the cases were students — two from Lewis and Clark Elementary School and one from Astor Elementary. The fourth case was a staff member at Astoria Middle School.

The school district released a dashboard documenting the number of students and staff from each school that had to isolate or quarantine because of the virus. The district has recorded 12 virus cases among students and staff since Sept. 10, and six new cases since the health authority's report, which was updated through last Sunday and released on Wednesday.

Four virus cases were reported in the Knappa School District. Three were students from Hilda Lahti Elementary School and the fourth was a student from Knappa High School.

Knappa Superintendent Bill Fritz said all four came from an event outside of school property.

Most school staff in Clatsop County are vaccinated against the coronavirus.

At a news conference last Wednesday morning, school district superintendents gave updates on vaccination rates and the precautions schools are taking to reduce the spread of the virus as in-person classes resumed in the new school year.

Gov. Kate Brown has required teachers and other school staff to be vaccinated

by Oct. 18. The mandate is intended to help keep schools open to in-person classes and reduce the risk to students under 12 who are not yet eligible for COVID-19 vaccines.

Superintendent Craig Hoppes, of Astoria, and Superintendent Susan Penrod, of Seaside, said over 90% of their staffs are vaccinated.

"The timeline was tight, but we got on it pretty quick and gave our staff numerous different options for them," Hoppes said. "I was, to be honest, pleased to see the large number of staff who got vaccinated based on this requirement. We weren't sure how that was going to go, but a large number got vaccinated based on this mandate."

Superintendent Tom Rogozinski, of the Warrenton-Hammond School District, said about 87% of his staff are vaccinated, but he expects the number to reach 92% by the deadline.

"As far as the challenges of meeting that deadline, it was a tight window to get a two-dose vaccine ... but at least in my experience, it's very manageable," Rogozinski said.

Superintendent Steve Phillips, of Jewell, said he believes his staff will reach the 90% mark by the deadline.

Superintendent Bill Fritz, of Knappa, said 92% of his staff are vaccinated and he anticipates the number reaching 95%.

Fritz said the school district will lose a couple of staff members who are choosing to step away due to the mandate.

"We're saddened by that. We value all of our people, but we also understand that people need to make individual choices," Fritz said.

School districts are working closely with the county's Public Health Department to track and respond to virus cases.

"We work together to make sure that there's consistency between the guidance and the school protocols, and that we've covered all the bases without overreacting," said Margo Lalich, the county's interim public health director. "We want to maintain perspective. It's been a little bumpy — as we all expected — coming back to a new school year and yet we're working through it."

While the county has experienced the worst few months of the pandemic, superintendents described schools as safe for students.

"Due to the safety protocols that schools have currently and have had for the last year, schools are the safest place in the community for children to be," Fritz said. "The likelihood of COVID spread in schools is far lower than the likelihood of spread in our communities at large."



R.J. Marx

The visitors center bathroom in Seaside.

Restroom: 'Not a lot we can do about it'

Continued from Page A1

The 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals, which covers Oregon, has ruled that ordinances against sleeping outdoors on public property when there are no shelters available are unconstitutional.

A new state law approved this year requires that local regulations on sitting, lying, sleeping or keeping warm and dry in outdoor public spaces be objectively reasonable for the homeless. The law aims to protect the homeless from fines or arrest for camping on public property when there are no other options. Cities and counties must comply by July 2023.

"That's where 'reasonableness' is the word that everybody is using," Ham said. "That kind of concession, so to speak, 'We're going to let you kind of be here now, because there's nowhere else for you to go.'"

Heman said he had witnessed



R.J. Marx

Keith Chandler, of the Seaside Downtown Development Association, and Ken Heman, of the Seaside Visitors Bureau, discuss problems around city restrooms.

drug users block the doors to the restroom.

"Visitors back out and leave. Or they come to us and go, 'Is there another bathroom I can use?' I've gotten to that point where the only way we can get them to move on and

get the hint that this isn't the place to be is calling Dave."

"These people, unfortunately, have a right to be able to rest," Ham said. "They have a right to use public property. And there's not a lot we can do about it."

School: County has experienced a surge in cases

Continued from Page A1

"Not only has it been a long time since we've had all the students back, full time, every day, but we have them all back in new buildings," she said. "We're learning a lot of new routines."

Sarah Shields, assistant superintendent of instruction, agreed, adding, "It's like a brand-new thing."

The school district's leadership team continues attending meetings hosted by the Oregon Health Authority and Oregon Department of Education to stay abreast of new health information and recommendations regarding the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Oregon Health Authority weekly outbreak report last week showed five virus cases from the Seaside School District. Four were students from Pacific Ridge Elementary School and one was a student from Seaside High School.

Clatsop County has experienced a surge in coronavirus cases over the last few months because of the delta variant. However, student-aged children are also experiencing case rate increases.

"When data started coming out, we were seeing mostly cases in elderly, but it's starting to get younger," Penrod said. "For students, the highest rates are among 12- to 17-year-olds."

Students of color are also disproportionately affected in terms of case rates.

In light of cases across the county, Penrod said, "we are very dedicated to keeping our students safe by having protocols in place."

She used the metaphor of Swiss cheese to illustrate how each individual protocol — from wearing masks and vaccinations to entry screenings and heightened sanitization and cleaning practices — adds a layer of protection for students, staff members and the community, and decreases the risk of transmission.

"We continue to eliminate holes," she said. "It continues to keep us safer."

Penrod also presented the unofficial enrollment numbers for the 2021-22 school year. Six-hundred-fifty students are enrolled and attending class on-site at Pacific Ridge Elementary School. At the

secondary school level, there are about 390 middle school students enrolled, and 500 high schoolers, a significant increase from the 2020-21 school year. Cannon Beach Academy's enrollment is at roughly 50 students, up from 43 last year. Penrod said they will provide official enrollment numbers in October.

The school board approved a \$750 donation from Tom Briggs for STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics) supplies, activities and projects at Pacific Ridge.

The board also approved plans for a garden site at Pacific Ridge that will offer more hands-on, outdoor learning opportunities. The project will be completed in phases. The first phase, which is budgeted at \$1,650, includes 7 feet of raised beds, one per grade level including pre-kindergarten; rain-catch barrels; and decorations for the fence. In the future, the Pacific Ridge Garden Team hopes to add compost bins, a shed for storage and garden signage. The second phase will involve expanding the garden, adding fencing and potentially building a framed greenhouse.



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Astoria

Large three family Garage Sale
October 1,2,3 starts at 9:30, but no earlier!

Lots of vintage, antique and modern furniture, dishware, many framed pictures and prints, Coleman gas furnace like new, tools, wood, vintage wood extension ladders, Henreardon dining table and chairs, clothing, even the bathroom sink! New items added daily! Cash is best! So are Masks! See you there!

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OCT 1 & 2: 10am-5pm
179 E. Monroe

A 1908 COTTAGE FULL OF GREAT STUFF

Sale includes antiques.....most from 1880-1900. Walnut hutch, walnut chest of drawers, teacart, pine trunks, small tables (two tables came from Portland's Dan and Louie's Oyster Bar from 1908), oak rocking chair, two twin bed headboards, gorgeous queen bed headboard, English chairs.

Framed art. 1900-1930. Lots of small antiques: glass, hand painted china, primitives, graniteware, etc.
Old books including leather bound.

Interesting floor and table lamps (2 table lamps made from a 1880's water pump and one from a coffee grinder)
Ship models, games, quality women's clothing (med. sz. 10-12)

Everything found in a kitchen: dishes, pots and pans, utensils. Weber gas barbecue

Sets of sheets and towels, bedspreads.

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