

# Illinois Valley News

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## Hospital visits spike in Oregon

Plenty of ICU beds in local hospitals, officials report

**Skyla Patton**

*IVN Contributing Writer*

Grants Pass and Medford area hospitals have reported steadily increasing numbers of COVID patients, with enough beds and resources to take in more. Within a matter of weeks, Josephine County skyrocketed

from a low-risk county to an “extreme risk” as the third wave of COVID-19 sweeps the state.

On Dec. 16, the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) reported Oregon ICU headroom use as “low,” with only 33% of available beds being utilized by COVID patients and room for more. This is a notable increase from Nov. 12, where only 12% of ICU beds were taken by COVID patients, although still not enough to push the state to

a critical capacity. Non-ICU hospital visits across the state have increased dramatically, with over 670 hospitalizations mid-December from 250 hospitalizations in early November.

The state of Oregon has the fewest hospital beds per capita in the entire nation. Asante Three Rivers Medical Center, located in Grants Pass, has 122 staffed beds. Providence Medford Medical Center and Asante Rogue Regional Medical Center

combined have 481 staffed beds. During the first week of December, a seven-day average bed occupancy showed Asante Three Rivers at an inpatient bed capacity of 67.2% and ICU beds at a lower 56.4%. Providence Medford reported an inpatient bed capacity of 85.5%, ICU beds at a higher 90.4%. Asante Rogue reported a lower capacity similar to Grants Pass, with 61.1% inpatient beds being used, and only 57.7% of ICU beds.

SEE COVID ON A-8



(Courtesy photo for the Illinois Valley News)

Burned trees have been cut and piled at Page Mountain Sno Park.

## Page Mountain Sno Park stays shut for winter

**Christy Solo**

*IVN Contributing Writer*

While everyone should safely enjoy the outdoors this winter, unfortunately Page Mountain Sno Park will need to be crossed off the winter fun list.

Due to hazard trees and other damages caused by the Slater Fire, Page Mountain will remain closed for the 20/21 season. The Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) will not be plowing the road or parking lot.

The Slater Fire started Sept. 8 on the Klamath National Forest and moved onto the Six Rivers and Rogue River-Siskiyou national forests (RSNF), and eventually burned 157,270 acres.

SEE SNO ON A-8

## Details murky in Merlin slaying

On Monday, Dec. 14, at 6:52 a.m., Josephine County Sheriff’s deputies and troopers responded to the report of a shooting at 200 Corporate Way near Merlin in Josephine County. Upon arrival, Kurt Krauss, 56, of Grants Pass, was found dead on scene.

Although the crime itself was not caught on camera, surveillance footage revealed that Krauss had just arrived at the office building he owns, and was shot moments after exiting his vehicle. His body was found feet away from his truck, the door to which he didn’t even have the opportunity to close before he was slain.

According to bystanders within earshot, five more shots were fired within a few minutes of the first. An anonymous source said that a gunshot was audible in the same area an hour before the shooting, suggesting that the killer had taken a practice shot, and thus that the murder was premeditated and set up as an ambush, rather than a heat of the moment violent outburst.

A source close to the victim opined that the shooter was acting on a personal animus toward Krauss, as opposed to a random mugging or hired killing.

The investigation was turned over to the Josephine County Major Crimes Team. Oregon State Police (OSP) is the lead investigating agency and is being assisted by the Josephine County Sheriff’s Office, Grants Pass Department of Public Safety, and the Josephine County District Attorney’s Office.

SEE OBITUARY ON A-2

## The Santas are ‘IN’



(Photos by Tammie Pickens for the Illinois Valley News)

**ABOVE: Santa visited Laurel Cemetery Saturday, Dec. 19. Charlie, 5, gave a letter to Santa asking for a train while Marcie Granville sat nearby.**



**LEFT: Emmarie Coffman, 2, meets Mr. & Mrs. Claus in a Plexiglas “snow globe” at the Illinois Valley Safe House Alliance’s first Christmas toy drive Saturday, Dec. 19. IVSHA was able to get gifts for 107 children, personalized for each child’s wish.**

## City declares Junction Inn nuisance property

Remodel in limbo, owners now face \$500 a day in fines

**Laura Mancuso**

*IVN editor*

Two properties in the city of Cave Junction were designated nuisance properties. The resolutions designating these properties passed with a 4-0 vote during a Dec. 14 city council meeting held on Zoom.

The Junction Inn has been a sore spot with the city

for years going back to the broken-down sign in 2018, to the inn being shutdown and condemned as a safety hazard in 2019 and most recently being declared a nuisance according to Resolution 915.

This complaint was made because the Junction Inn property violated the city’s municipal code 8.08.160 regarding dangerous and derelict buildings and the person responsible shall be responsible for a \$500 penalty for each day the nuisance remains.

SEE INN ON A-8



(Photo by Laura Mancuso for the Illinois Valley News)

Trash sits behind the Junction Inn Monday, Dec. 21.

## Deputy gives law enforcement report to city council

**Laura Mancuso**

*IVN staff*

Josephine County Deputy Gerald Bayard gave a law enforcement report to the Cave Junction City Council on Zoom Dec. 14.

Bayard said, “There has been a significant improvement just by having a night shift” and he mentioned less speed racers. “Although we are still struggling with trespassing incidents, disorderly conduct and an uplift in vehicle thefts,” said Bayard, who added that criminal mischief and burglary incidents have decreased from last year.

Bayard mentioned that homeless individuals were congregating under awnings in front of businesses. Bayard said deputies were working with business owners regarding trespass orders and to get homeless to move along, but this was difficult because there were no plans for long-term housing options at this time to send them to.

SEE COUNCIL ON A-9

## First hearing set for fire district formation

**C. J. Schatza**

*IVN copy editor*

A slew of administrative decisions were made at the Dec. 16 weekly business session (WBS) of the Board of Josephine County Commissioners. Held over Zoom, the meeting began with a public hearing for the second reading of an ordinance amending the county’s unclaimed property protocol.

The Josephine County Sheriff’s Office has thousands of personal effects and recovered items dating back decades in its collection of evidence. “Currently the code requires the evidence technician to provide a report and recommendation to the board of commissioners for every item that is to be disposed of,” explained assistant county legal counsel Leah Harper.

SEE COUNTY ON A-6





# Food pantry gets \$28K in funding

## Facility gets new walk-in fridge, dishwasher, other improvements

Cave Junction Community Services food pantry at the Cave Junction Seventh Day Adventist Church has received notification of a \$10,000 grant from the Cow Creek Umpqua Indian Foundation to fund capital upgrades to its facility and to cover part of the basic operations cost of distributing food.

In addition, a \$7,000 grant from the Patricia D. and William B. Smullin Foundation has provided critical funding to repair the walk-in freezer unit and the electrical upgrade required to support the refrigeration.

\$10,000 has been granted by the city of Cave Junction from the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act funding for repair of the walk-in refrigerator, renovation of both walk-in refrigeration units, flooring and walls, and surfacing of the food distribution tables to meet health code requirements, and the acquisition of a dishwasher.

Another \$1,000 is committed from the Four Way Community Foundation in honor of the late Harry Mackin, who was a stalwart volunteer in the fight against hunger.

While these funds are essential to establish a successful food distribution system, they do not address

ongoing costs such as food purchases, utilities, and other much-needed items required to keep the doors open.

"Donations from local households will be a critical factor in our ability to keep the wolf from the door for our neighbors during this time of unprecedented difficulty. It's wonderful that regional foundations and our city of Cave Junction believe in us. Now, do we believe in ourselves?" said Patti Delk, the program's founder. "Every dollar donated stays right here in the Illinois Valley to help feed our own community. We need your help. Please give."

Donations may be sent by a check written to the Cave Junction SDA Church;

please write in the memo section of the check "for CJCS" and mail your check to the Cave Junction SDA Church (501c3), P.O. Box 330, Cave Junction, OR 97523.

All donations are fully tax deductible. Volunteers are also needed to help with socially distanced and masked jobs such as picking up food in Grants Pass, assembling food boxes, maintaining records using Excel, and numerous other tasks.

If you are interested in volunteering call Tyler Schaffer 541-659-3319. To learn more about CJCS please call Patti Delk 541-415-1491 or follow us on Facebook under Cave Junction SDA Community Services.

## SNO... Continued from A-1

Page Mountain Sno Park is located in the mountains above Cave Junction and the Illinois Valley, on the RSNF and is normally a great place to spend a winter's day. This year, however, it's just too dangerous.

Work on the snow park includes the removal of standing dead trees and the remains of structures burned by the fire.

How does it look?

Rogue River Siskiyou National Forest personnel took a photo. In the foreground, you can see what is left of the warming shelter. In the background is the treated tube run. Timber decks are to be sold & removed late winter.

Do keep Page Mountain in mind for next season, the sledding is great and the views are spectacular. There are tent sites, toilets and pets are allowed.

## COVID... Continued from A-1

On Dec. 17, Asante Rogue Regional received the first shipment of Pfizer's immunization shots for Southern Oregon medical workers. Holly Nickerson, director of quality for Asante, said they are among the first five facilities across the state to receive the vaccine and predict the majority of staff to be vaccinated by mid-to late February. The first shipment is expected to cover less than 15% of the Asante healthcare workforce, and will not be mandated per Oregon law.


Courtney Wilson, vice president of Medical Affairs with Asante Rogue Regional Medical Center, said that while the distribution of the vaccine is exciting, it's important to not view it as a cure-all. "The vaccine is going to help us take care of patients initially, and we expect that our healthcare workers who get vaccinated will be able to stay healthy and keep coming to work," said Wilson. "We don't necessarily expect the vaccine to flatten the curve in the short term, and we are

very much still concerned about any potential ramifications of holiday gatherings."

Asante encourages that everyone continues to practice public health recommendations, such as washing hands, wearing face coverings and keeping distance from others, including close friends and family where possible. "Unless Oregonians continue to practice those recommendations, we are still very much at risk of running out of precious resources in our hospitals," said Wilson.

On Dec. 16, Oregon had reported over 96,000 COVID-19 cases to date with a rising death toll of 1,213. Josephine County alone has contributed 854 of these cases and 11 deaths so far. Jackson County surpassed that number with 4,978 cases and 52 deaths. Based on stats from HHS, there could be over 150 COVID-positive patients occupying ICU beds in area hospitals, with the expectation of more in the coming weeks.

*Christmas Dinner*  
served on  
**Friday, December 25**  
from 1pm until ?  
at  
**Laurel Cemetery Chapel**  
with a  
**White Elephant Gift Exchange**  
and  
**The UGLIEST SWEATER** contest

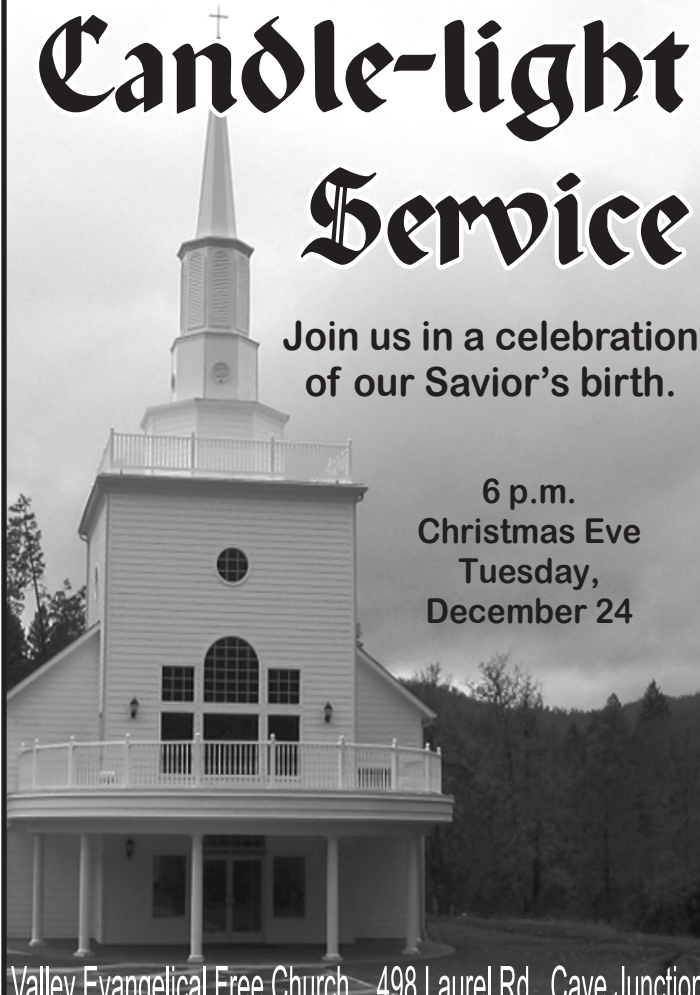


Covid-19 precautions will be in place, but we plan on having fun anyway!  
Any questions, please let me know.  
Thank you for all you do for LCA.  
*God Bless*

# Candle-light Service

Join us in a celebration of our Savior's birth.

6 p.m.  
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Valley Evangelical Free Church 498 Laurel Rd., Cave Junction

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