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Oregon set to OK plan for Providence to move home health care to a for-profit

Deal would give Tennessee company prominent role

By Kristine de Leon
The Oregonian

Oregon health officials have tentatively given the green light — with strings attached — to a controversial deal that will give a private equity-backed, for-profit healthcare company a major role in Providence's home health and hospice operations in Oregon.

Regulators with the Oregon Health Authority said they plan to approve a joint venture between Providence and Tennessee-based Compassus that would shift management and half-ownership of home health and hospice services to the for-profit home health provider.

The approval comes after months of warnings from nurses and patient advocates that the deal could make it harder for people, especially in rural areas or with complex medical needs, to get care. They worry a for-profit ownership structure could trim staff or specialized programs to save money, even though regulators haven't formally tied specific service cuts in other states where this joint venture already exists.

The deal carries particularly high stakes because Providence operates one of Oregon's largest home health and hospice care networks, serving thousands of people each year with serious or terminal illnesses.

Home health care includes a wide range of services such as nursing care, physical and occupational therapy, rehabilitation and other medical social work delivered in a patient's home, often for people recovering from surgery or living with chronic medical conditions. Hospice care focuses on comfort and support for people with terminal illness nearing the end of life.

Turn to CARE, Page 8A

Oregon voter turnout rises to 26% this morning. To vote today, use a drop box.

By Jamie Goldberg
The Oregonian

Turnout in Oregon's primary election reached nearly 26% as of early this morning, the state reported.

That figure includes ballots that arrived at election offices through Monday, along with a small number that were accepted by a few election offices early Tuesday.

A portion of ballots will flow into election offices after Election Day as well, and the results of some races may not be called for days.

Turnout appears to be trending slightly ahead of turnout at similar times in recent primary elections where races for Oregon governor candidates were on the ballot,

Turn to VOTER, Page 8A

Dam managers working to keep Rogue River fish alive

By Vickie Aldous
of the Daily Courier

With almost no snowpack to feed reservoirs, managers who oversee water releases from Lost Creek Lake on the upper Rogue River said they will do what they can to prevent widespread fish deaths.

Cold water released from the reservoir north of Shady Cove helps boost the river's flow and keep temperatures cool for fish.

Managers try to mitigate the impacts from low flows and warm water, which can weaken and kill fish due to increased infections and other problems.

"In all likelihood, we won't be able to mitigate as much as we want to, but we will still be doing our best to keep those temperatures low and not see any large fish die-offs," said Kevin McAllister, a civil engineer with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, which works with the Oregon Department of Fish and

Wildlife to keep Rogue River fish healthy and alive.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers gave a briefing Monday about conditions at Lost Creek Lake, which is 79% full, and Applegate Lake, which stands at 52% full.

Turn to FISH, Page 8A

Pop culture comes to life at Rogue Comic Con



Photos by JULIE ANDERSON / Daily Courier

Members of the Southern Oregon University Samoan Club (from left) Gwen Felise-loka, Taliilagi Vili and Raquel Moeaia together hug Totoro, a beloved Studio Ghibli character from the animated film "My Neighbor Totoro," during this year's Rogue Comic Con on Saturday at Pear Blossom Park in Medford.

By Chrissy Ewald
of the Daily Courier

MEDFORD — As a cosplay superfan, Marius McKeever spent hours Saturday morning being remade as Dabi, one of the villains from the anime series "My Hero Academia."

"I woke up at 5 a.m.," McKeever said. "I wish I'd had another hour."

McKeever's fiancée, Aspen Zieman, was dressed as an original character inspired by a Japanese fox spirit. They were among thousands of people who came to Pear Blossom Park over the weekend for Rogue Comic Con, one of downtown Medford's largest festivals and an opportunity for people across the Rogue Valley to celebrate pop culture.

Many had donned elaborate costumes, some in preparation for a costume contest in the afternoon, but many just for the fun of it.

Rooted in Western comic books, festivals and conventions like



Founder of Southern Oregon Cosplay Collective Marius McKeever (left), and fellow member Aspen Zieman show off their cosplay personas on Saturday.

Rogue Comic Con have expanded over the years to encompass a broad variety of pop culture media: movies, graphic novels, anime, television shows, video games — even collectible playing cards.

McKeever and Zieman have both been doing cosplay for many years — McKeever since 2010, and Zieman since 2004 — and they've been coming to Rogue Comic Con since its original incarnation as Medford Comic Con in 2015.

"I just love seeing how much the Rogue Valley has come to love my nearest and dearest hobby," McKeever said. "Because you know, 16 years ago, I was just running around in the park with my friends. People were already cosplaying here, but not a lot of people were out and about, so I'd drag all my friends outside. It was like, 'We're going to actually hang out in cosplay, because why else are we wearing it?'"

Turn to ROGUE, Page 3A

450 rural Northwest communities, such as Cave Junction, Glendale, Trail, at risk

Study: Wildfire risks may be related to socioeconomic

By Shaanth Nanguneri
Oregon Capital Chronicle

More than 450 mostly small communities throughout the Northwest, such as Cave Junction, Glendale and La Pine in southern and central Oregon, are at greater risk of suffering from wildfires and their impacts than previously thought when socioeconomic conditions are factored into risk assessments, new research finds.

Researchers from Oregon State University and The Nature Conservancy, with funding from the U.S. Forest Service, conducted a review of wildfire risks in more than 1,000 communities in the region, and applied a social vulnerability index to also account for factors such as household demographics, neighborhood structural density, housing types and local transportation.

Nearly half the communities, 459, were shown to be at greater wildfire risk than previously thought. For 541 communities, risk levels declined when socioeconomic factors were con-

sidered, indicating public dollars might be better served assisting low-income communities with wildfire prevention than more affluent ones, the researchers suggested.

The findings were published in April in the peer-reviewed Environmental Research Letters journal.

"Communities experiencing less social vulnerability often have the capacity and resources needed to apply for and make use of publicly funded mitigation," said Andy McEvoy, a professor at Oregon State University's College of Forestry, in a May news release. "The many com-

munities across the Northwest that are experiencing high social vulnerability have less capacity and fewer resources — but that doesn't mean they aren't facing the same risk, or even greater."

Another 2024 research paper from Oregon State University notes that a lack of investment in prevention and mitigation led to more fire impacts in vulnerable communities.

The researchers also found that communities scoring high on social vulnerability with high wildfire hazard rates also tended to be smaller with less than 5,000 buildings, and were

located in drier areas of the Northwest, including Warm Springs, Oregon and Goldendale, Washington.

Chris Dunn, a co-author of the study, said the towns have "slightly lower wildfire exposure than some nearby, better-resourced communities like Bend and Leavenworth, but they experience greater social vulnerability and therefore are likely to experience greater impacts if a fire occurred."

Home hardening and landscape and neighborhood wildfire prevention, smoke management plans, wildfire

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