



3rd-graders keep reading challenge going online, **A6**



LOCAL ART MOVES ONLINE
Gallery owner creates website featuring area artists, **A5**



STANWOOD CAMANO NEWS

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Stay-home efforts may be working

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Inslee closes schools for remainder of school year, **PAGE A9**
Q&A: How to get your stimulus check, **PAGE A3**

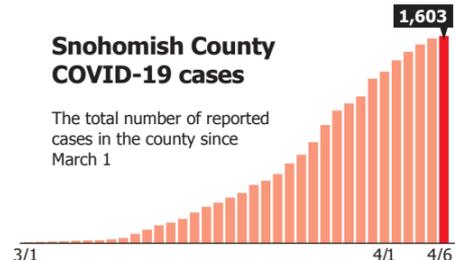
By EVAN CALDWELL
ecaldwell@scnews.com
New data shows Washington may be “flattening the curve.”
The state may have reached “peak resource use” on April 2, according to

the latest analysis from the University of Washington’s Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation. The IHME models suggest the state hit a high of 972 hospital beds in use on April 2 — well below the 4,907 beds available. The deaths-per-day from the CO-

VID-19 pandemic continue to drop, as well, according to the model.
However, much of the rest of the nation continues to struggle to limit the impact of the virus on hospital systems.
■ SEE EFFORTS, **A6**

Snohomish County COVID-19 cases

The total number of reported cases in the county since March 1



‘A time of stress and anxiety’

Local small businesses scrambling to access economic relief options



PHOTOS BY EVAN CALDWELL / STANWOOD CAMANO NEWS

Most mornings now, Traci Smith, owner of Picnic Pantry and Parlour, travels to the now-quiet downtown Stanwood main street where she loads her car with a box of items from her store to sell online from home.

By EVAN CALDWELL
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Traci Smith saw the emergency relief packages as a sign of hope for small businesses.
But so far, most are finding that it’s just more stress and anxiety.
“I spent about three hours looking into the SBA (Small Business

Administration) loans, but links weren’t working, and there’s no one to talk to or to walk you through the process,” said Smith, owner of The Picnic Pantry and Parlour in downtown Stanwood. “Honestly, I got frustrated and stopped for now.”
Smith is one of the countless businesses across the country that temporarily shut its doors amid the economic freefall from the

COVID-19 pandemic. Like many other businesses, Smith is eligible to apply for relief measures such as emergency loans to help cover things like payroll, debt and rent.
However, the path from deciding on applying for relief to actually receiving money is long and winding with myriad hurdles and delays.
■ SEE BUSINESS, **A8**



Smith packages items people bought online with thank-you notes. Puzzles are a hot commodity during the stay-home order, she said.

Sustaining family connections while keeping a safe distance

By PEGGY WENDEL
Staff Reporter

The COVID-19 pandemic has triggered lockdowns of various degrees. Many people with loved ones in area adult care facilities have suddenly found their traditional connections severed. The rapid changes that resulted have caused worries and anxiety as families adapt.
The Stanwood Camano News connected with three local families who describe some of these new challenges.

Fighting fear with humor

Megan Dascher Watkins, 50, of Stanwood runs through a drive-through to get a coffee for her mom, Jill Burton-Dascher, 77, who lives in assisted living at Olympic Place in Arlington.
Megan used to bring a cup of coffee and stop to visit her mom, but now she



SUBMITTED

Megan Dascher Watkins and her mom, Jill Burton-Dascher, visited regularly before the quarantine.

can only drop it off. The facility has been quarantined for about a month. More than a week ago, a resident tested positive for COVID-19, Megan said.
“It’s terrifying, absolutely terrifying,

because she is the perfect candidate to get this and have it not go well,” she said. “This is not the way I want my mom to go.”

Her mother has lung issues and asthma and is bedridden. She can’t be moved for a window visit and hasn’t seen any family for over three weeks.

Megan calls her mother every day. With the help of an aide, they tried a FaceTime video chat, but her mom kept putting the phone to her face.

Because her mother is so vulnerable, Megan worries about young aides who might carry the virus without showing symptoms.

Megan’s husband can’t work and had to temporarily close their business, yet Megan tackles fear with humor and sometimes dons a gas mask. She has dressed as a bear to go to Hagggen for groceries.

■ SEE FAMILY, **A6**



Business

► FROM A1

“You think these loans are a save-all,” she said. “But first of all, it’s a still loan that you have to pay back at the end of the day. ... And it’s hard to find a banker who has experience with SBA loans, which is a completely different world.”

It’s a bureaucratic maze that Stanwood City Administrator Jennifer Ferguson knows quite well. One of her previous jobs was working for the state of Minnesota’s Small Business Development Center.

“I can walk the path with these small business owners rather than kicking them down the path and saying ‘good luck,’” Ferguson said last week as city staff began laying the groundwork to help local businesses.

Stanwood has since launched a page on its website — stanwoodwa.org — filled with resources for local businesses, including tips on applying for emergency loans.

However, that’s just



EVAN CALDWELL / STANWOOD CAMANO NEWS

Traci Smith, owner of Picnic Pantry and Parlour, brings a box of items from her store to her car on the empty downtown Stanwood street.

to get businesses started. They’ll still need to get their bookkeeping and finances in order to then meet with a banker or lender — who may or may not be trained in SBA loans.

That’s why Ferguson said one of her next steps is to build a consortium of local lenders and bankers to help the area’s small business owners.

“It can be frustrating,” Ferguson said. “That’s why we’re trying to assemble a one-stop shop of resources for businesses to find a

lender.”

John Russell, owner of The UPS Store in Stanwood, said that although he has a good relationship with a local bank that’s helping him apply for relief, the requirements have been changing.

“That’s been the biggest challenge so far, just the tremendous amount of confusion on what’s available to small businesses,” Russell said Friday. “Even this morning, the application changed again, and I had to fill it out again.”

The UPS Store remains open as an essential service, but business has dropped off by about 25%, Russell said. He plans to apply for aid from the Paycheck Protection Program, a new federally guaranteed low-interest loan program. It offers businesses and nonprofits with 1 to 500 employees loans designed to help cover two months worth of payroll, rent and utility costs. The loan could be completely forgiven if the money is spent mainly on their workers.

“There’s still a lot of huge unknowns,” Russell said. “We don’t know what everything will be like in two weeks or a month. Just that difference is a factor you have to plan for. And when things start to get out farther, it gets more complicated. And as a business owner, you want to be proactive and make sure you can stay active. Neither I nor my banker knows when the relief will come. It could be months.”

Another hurdle is that the systems providing economic help are overwhelmed right now.

Last week, unemployment claims in the U.S. surged by a record 6.64 million claims, dwarfing the previous high mark of 3.28 million set the week prior. Now, almost 10 million Americans have filed for unemployment in just two weeks.

In Washington, claims for unemployment benefits soared to a record 181,975 for the week of March 22-28, according to the state Employment Security Department. That’s a 3,513% increase year over year, and a 41% increase over the previous week. By comparison, this is seven times the peak week during the 2008-09 recession which was 26,075 weekly initial claims.

Snohomish County saw the highest increase in total initial claims, jumping from 13,692 to 21,176.

The crush of jobless claims means wait times to apply for unemployment benefits over the phone stretch on for hours.

The recently passed \$2.2 trillion CARES Act expanded unemployment benefits to many, such as self-employed people like Smith of the Picnic Pantry who was previously eligible to apply — but it also caused more confusion. States’ online systems weren’t completely set up to allow people like her to file a claim.

“I know it’s just an overwhelmed system, but you’re trying to keep a business going and you still have a mortgage at home,” Smith said. “I’d just like unemployment benefits.”

Elaine Traversi, executive director for the Stanwood Chamber of Commerce, said she estimates up to 40% of chamber members have temporarily closed the doors on their brick-and-mortar operations. Some have moved parts of their business online.

“There’s just so much info for businesses owners to wrap their minds around right now,” Traversi said. “It’s a huge learning curve, and you have to do it fast because it’s time sensitive.”

Ferguson recommends local business owners start by establishing a relationship with a banker or lender, getting financial statements in order and researching the available loan and grant options.

“It can be very technical,” she said. “That’s why their banker is going to be their best line of help.”

Meanwhile, Smith is doing what she can through Facebook to sell items from her Picnic Pantry store one car load at a time.

“I drive to the store, load

Resources

General state information, such as what businesses and jobs as essential is at [coronavirus.wa.gov](https://www.wa.gov/coronavirus)

The city of Stanwood has collected information for local businesses and for residents at [stanwoodwa.org](https://www.stanwoodwa.org)

Information about the emergency small business loans from the U.S. Small Business Administration is at [disasterloan.sba.gov/ela](https://www.disasterloan.sba.gov/ela)

Camano Island Chamber of Commerce has helpful information for local businesses at [here4u.camanoisland.org](https://www.here4u.camanoisland.org)

Help for those who have lost jobs, such as filing for unemployment benefits is available at [esd.wa.gov](https://www.esd.wa.gov)

For questions about getting state health insurance, visit [wahealthplanfinder.org](https://www.wahealthplanfinder.org)

Links to more resources are with this story at [SCnews.com](https://www.SCnews.com)

How to help

The SnoCo Gift Card Challenge: In an effort to support local small businesses, the Economic Alliance Snohomish County is launching the SnoCo Gift Card Challenge on Friday, April 10. EASC is urging people to buy at least one gift card from a local small business in our community. In addition, they are recommending customers donate the gift cards to local healthcare professionals, first responders and essential workers in the community.

up the car with gifts — like Easter stuff and puzzles, which are huge right now — and go home and sell them on Facebook,” she said. “I then either deliver it to the door if you’re local or ship it.”

It’s not ideal.

“It’s definitely a time of stress and anxiety,” Smith said. “But it’s also a time of sorrow with the loss of lives. Also it’s sad seeing our community and our streets so empty. The unknown of all of this is the scariest thing.”

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- In order to minimize our exposure to each other please give as much information as you can over the phone when you call to request service.
- We have instituted a no handshaking policy.
- We ask that you keep a minimum distance of 6 ft from our servicemen and it would be appreciated if you don’t stay in the same room as they are. They may also ask to open a window.
- Please allow them the use of water and soap for handwashing as this is the best method to prevent illness.
- We will continue the use of booties when we enter you home/business.
- In addition, you will note the added use of gloves, safety glasses and face shields in some cases.
- We will ask that you use your own pens, whenever possible when signing our invoices and writing checks, etc.

Please understand that we may experience staff shortages and material delivery delays. We will try our best to meet your needs but at times we may have difficulty doing so. We believe that with everyone’s cooperation we can keep safe, get over this pandemic and get back to normal again. Thank you.

Stanwood & Camano Island

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