

Campus-Community Partnership to Prevent COVID-19: Western Oregon University + Polk County COVID-19 Project

Maddie Dirren, B.S.¹ Jenny Leon-Perez, B.S.¹ Kristty Polanco, MPH.² Jacqui Umstead, RN, BSN.² Megan Patton-Lopez, PhD., RDN.¹ Emily Vala-Haynes, PhD., MPH.¹

¹Division of Health and Exercise Science, Western Oregon University, Monmouth, OR; ² Polk County Health Services, Dallas, OR

Project Description

Western Oregon University Community Health faculty, alumna and students are teaming up with Polk County Health Services to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

Our team consists of WOU community health faculty, alumna, and undergraduate students in their final year of the program. Students on this project work as contact tracers, as well as with multiple task forces/populations and are involved in every step from development to distribution of health communication materials.

Project Aims

Our primary goal is to provide communication, outreach, and engagement to ensure that vulnerable populations in Polk County have access to accurate and timely information to protect their health.

- Prepare and coordinate community health student contact tracing team to support Polk County Health Services.
- Design and implement health communication and community outreach and engagement strategies for vulnerable populations.
- Provide real-time data to support contact tracing and COVID-19 case prevention efforts in Polk County and across Oregon.

Tasks & Accomplishments

- Support for mental health and wellbeing for farm workers and their families by providing monthly healthy living toolkits which includes a healthy living newsletter and resources for children and caregivers
- Real time data analysis and visualizations via a bi-weekly newsletter distributed to Polk County Public Health and WOU campus community
- Production of a COVID-19 informational video presentation for the WOU Division of Education and Leadership Initial Licensure Program
- Assistance with screenings and procedures for students and guests moving into WOU residence halls
- Development of health communication materials for WOU students to prevent the spread of COVID-19



Partners: Polk County Health Services, Oregon Health Authority



Contact Tracing

- Our team began contact tracing on July 10th.
- As of October 6th, we are monitoring 110 contacts.
- Our team consists of 11 contact tracers (5 are also Spanish speaking)
- We perform daily monitoring and initial interviews where we assess symptoms, provide COVID-19 information, and connect people to local resources.
- Refer to Figure 1 and Figure 2 for weekly updates.

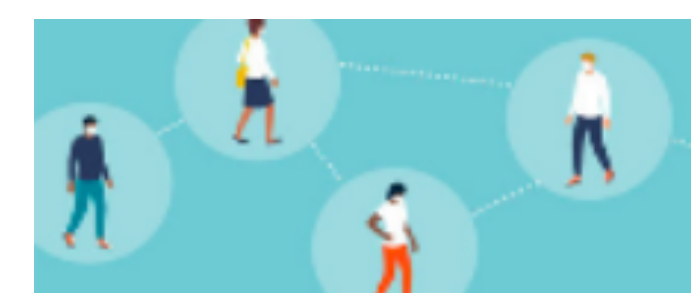


Figure 1. New and Total Contacts Monitored.

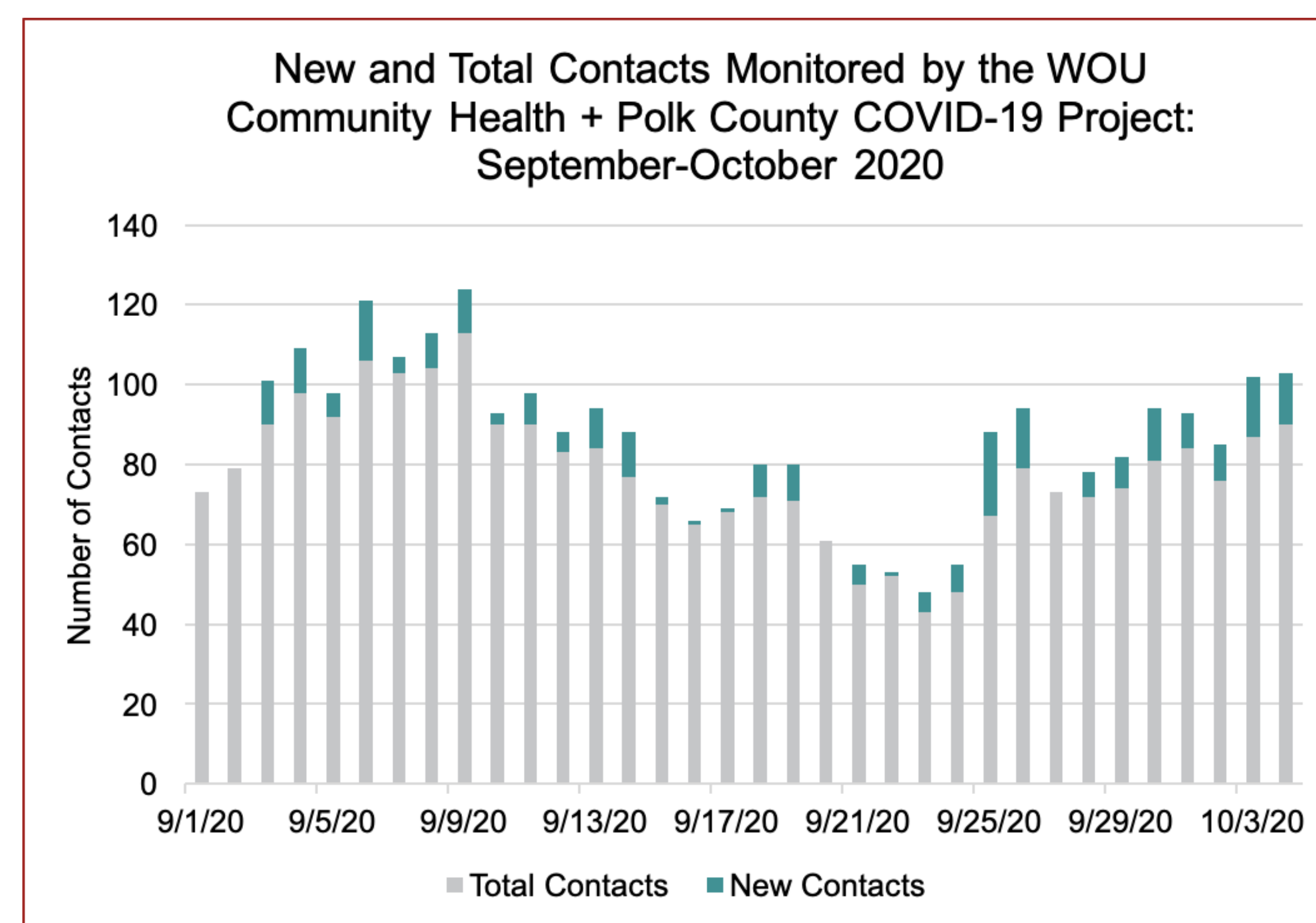
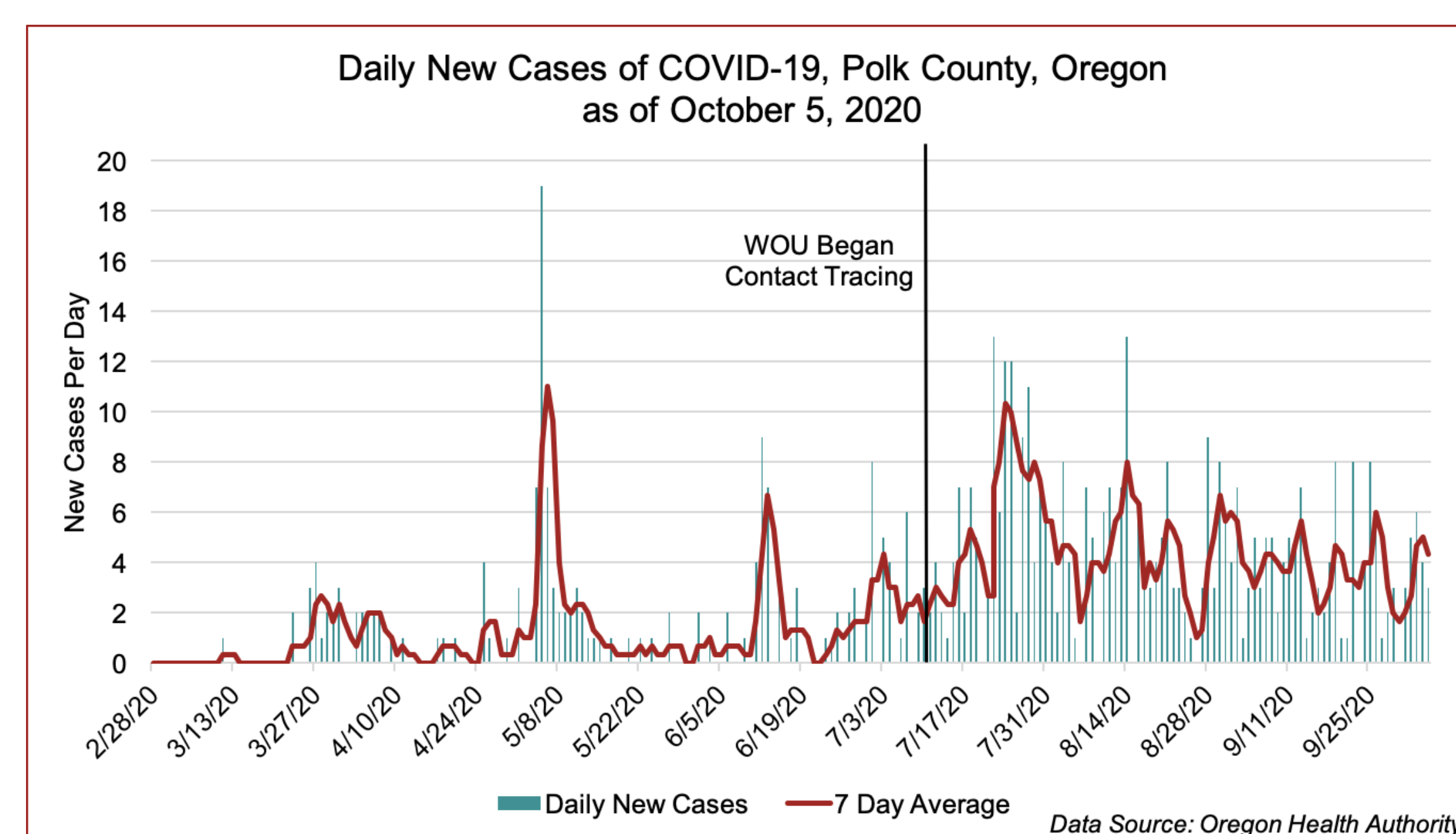


Figure 2. Daily New Cases of COVID-19, Polk County, Oregon as of October 5, 2020.



Health Communication & Outreach

Projects begin with partner meetings and literature review to assess needs. Students take leadership roles on projects and also work in teams to develop materials. Students practice written and oral communication, accessing and interpreting academic literature, critical thinking, and problem solving skills. Key audiences for our outreach and communication include: Latinx families with young children, K-12 Central School District families, older adults, and WOU students. Below are a few examples of our work:

- Partnership with local Dallas Retirement Village and the distribution of a mental health survey to its independent and assisted living residents.
- Development and distribution of an informational brochure and handout to the Central School District
- Creation of educational posters, flyers, and materials that were part of a health safety welcome kit distributed to every new student on campus.
- Outreach and education on COVID-19 safety and contact tracing information at several outreach events in Polk County with both English and Spanish speakers.

Figure 3. Examples of Health Communication Materials Developed.



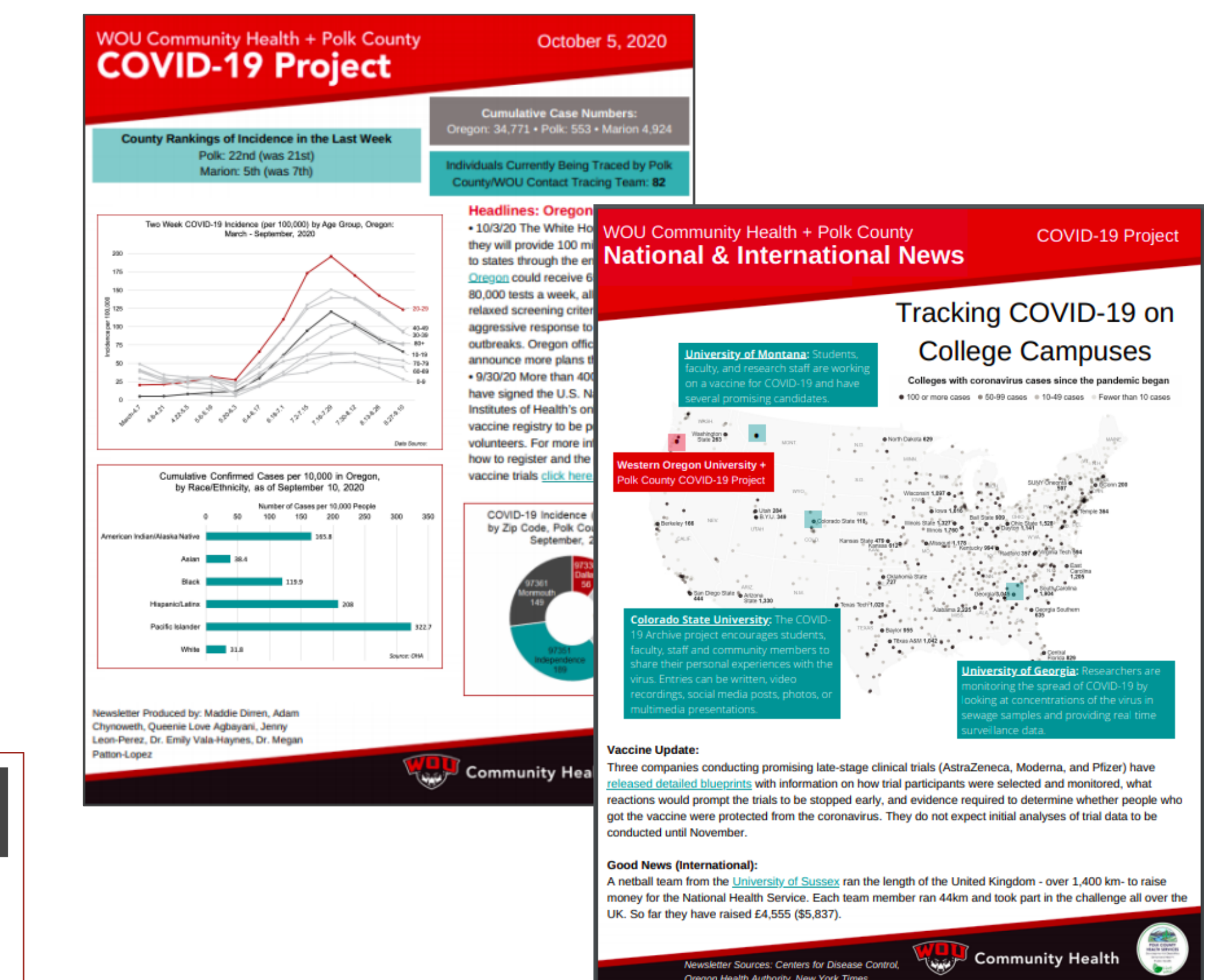
This project is financially supported by Oregon Health Authority and Polk County Health Services.

For more information contact us at communityhealth@wou.edu or visit wou.edu/hexs

COVID-19 Surveillance & Data Dissemination

- This bi-weekly data brief provides real-time local, national, and international data to our community partners
- Our team makes in-house data visuals
- This is distributed to WOU faculty, local county leadership, and Polk County Health Services to help make data driven decisions

Figure 4. Bi-weekly Data Brief.



Lessons Learned & Next Steps

- A campus-community partnership is essential for local public health efforts in rural communities.
- Undergraduate students bring energy and creativity to local public health concerns such as COVID-19.
- Universities are an anchor institution and can provide resources and technical assistance to support local health and wellbeing.
- Working remotely brings a new dimension to our work.

Next steps include continued contact tracing, collaborating with other agencies, and finding new ways to connect undergraduate students to other experiences that benefit our community.

