

Script 4/22

You're listening to KPTZ 91.9 FM in Port Townsend, Washington. This is Lily Haight with what's new in this week's Port Townsend Leader.

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The number of positive coronavirus cases in Jefferson County has held steady at 28 for 13 days as of April 21. More than 700 people have been tested. There are more than 12,000 confirmed cases of coronavirus in Washington, with a total of 652 deaths in the state.

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Since the start of March, 2,532 initial unemployment claims have been filed in Jefferson County, according to records from the Employment Security Department—averaging around 600 new claims each week.

These numbers mirror the state and country-wide spike in unemployment. The state's unemployment department reported 143,241 claims filed in the week ending on April 11.

That brings the state number of initial and recurring unemployment claims to more than 500,000 since social distancing measures began in early March due to the coronavirus.

During a press conference on April 16, Gov. Jay Inslee said the state paid \$125 million in jobless benefits last week, the largest amount paid in one week since the program began during the Great Depression.

The Employment Security Department hired 500 people to answer calls and help those new to the system receive their benefits, said Jim Vleming, Olympic region labor economist with the Employment Security Department.

The department also completed a system update over the weekend, and a wave of newly eligible people, such as those who are self-employed, could apply for benefits on Sunday.

Historically high traffic caused slowness on the website for those trying to file claims.

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Jefferson County was awarded \$1.2 million from the state's Department of Ecology to conserve critical wetland and watershed areas along the county's coastlines.

The state Department of Ecology announced April 13 it secured seven National Coastal Wetlands

Conservation grants worth \$5 million to help local partners restore coastal wetlands and 17,500 feet of marine shoreline in Jefferson, Kistap, Snohomish, Thurston and Whatcom counties.

Jefferson County will receive \$1.2 million from these federal grants for two separate projects: \$713,268 for a major conservation project in Discovery Bay and another \$508,000 to protect and restore 14.5 acres of wetlands along Tarboo Creek.

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Scores of family members, caretakers and friends weren't about to let a global pandemic get in the way of their plans to celebrate a Quilcene resident's 100th birthday on April 18th. Lura Mae Schafer waved from her doorstep as a crowd marched by her house with balloons and signs, singing Happy Birthday, while others drove by, honking their horns. Lura Mae was born April 18, 1920, and has spent all but four years of her life in Quilcene, where she has been intimately involved with the community. She is the oldest Quilcene-born resident. Over the decades, she has been chosen as Citizen of the Year, and Pioneer Citizen for the Quilcene Fair and Parade.

As a long-time member of the Quilcene Historical Museum, Lura Mae has been keeping an eye on the restoration work at the 1892 Worthington home across the street from her house.

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The wildflower show at Kah Tai Prairie Preserve in Port Townsend is one annual event that has not been canceled or postponed this year. The 1.4 acre preserve, bordered by a low white chain fence next to the parking lot at Port Townsend golf course, is in full bloom. A dedicated support crew, currently directed by botanist Dixie Llewellyn, has worked hard over the past four decades to protect and restore this rare remnant of

short-grass prairie. Now you too can marvel at the kaleidoscope of native plants that are in full bloom this week. Blue camas, spring gold, gleaming yellow buttercups, deep purple broomrape, chocolate lily, and snow white chickweed are just a few of the wildflowers on center stage this week, nestled in a thick swath of fescue grass.

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