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EDUCATION

Funds coming to address safety and prevention

Oregon schools to receive more than \$3M from federal education relief fund

By ANDREW CUTLER
The Observer

LA GRANDE — Oregon Gov. Kate Brown's allocation of \$3.3 million for school safety support and violence prevention throughout Oregon was welcome news to InterMountain Education Service District Superintendent Mark Mulvihill.

Each of Oregon's 19 regional education service districts, including Mulvihill's InterMountain ESD, will be able to hire a full-time specialist to oversee school safety and prevention programs with new federal funds.

"This is something that legislatively we've asked for, for a couple sessions. At InterMountain, we've done a lot with school security like hosting the summit," Mulvihill said. "We also have a suicide prevention specialist that does a super job for us. Anything we can do for funding that can then add staffing to work with families, kids and districts is a good thing."

Mulvihill said the original vision several years ago was focused on active shooter scenarios and, at the time, the position might have been staffed by someone retired from law enforcement or an individual with a law enforcement background. But through the years that focus has changed.

"It's morphed now into the preventative piece, a mental health piece," he said. "We of course have the Safe Oregon tip line that we piloted here and the safety summit that could be an annual event. That could be something that we do visitations to the (school) sites."

The funding for the new positions comes from the federal Governor's Emergency Education Relief Fund, which was reserved for allocations by governors through the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act.

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PENDLETON CHILDREN'S CENTER



Sen. Ron Wyden, D-Oregon, talks Monday, Oct. 3, 2022, at the Pendleton Children's Center with Kathryn Brown, secretary-treasurer of the nonprofit's board, and, at right, Brittany Jackson, director of the center.

Child care the 'Pendleton way'

Sen. Ron Wyden sees value of new model, pushes for taking on child care

By DAKOTA CASTETS-DIDIER
East Oregonian

PENDLETON — "A lot of kids fell through the cracks during the pandemic," Sen. Ron Wyden said the morning of Monday, Oct. 3, as he toured the Pendleton Children's Center.

"Too much of Oregon today is a child care desert," the Democrat continued. "Now we're going to be able to say, 'Let's pick up on the Pendleton way' as we turn this around," acknowledging Pendleton's status as a child care desert, a term to describe a place with woefully insufficient child care infrastructure. "We need good models for child care. The reality is, and I don't know what political party you're in and all that, but Democrats aren't supposed to use the word supply-side. I'm a supply-sider on child care. We very much need to increase supply."

The Pendleton Children's Center is set to open by the end of October and provide an initial 36 child care slots, all of which will be filled by children eligible for Oregon's Preschool Promise program. The center aims to scale upward to accommodate 150 children in all.

"Before COVID our board did a survey of parents and sent it out far and wide," Children's Center Secretary-Treasurer Kathryn Brown



Photos by Yasser Marte/East Oregonian
U.S. Sen. Ron Wyden, D-Oregon, highlights the value of the Pendleton Children's Center on Monday, Oct. 3, 2022, during a tour of the center. "Too much of Oregon today is a child care desert," he said. "Now we're going to be able to say, 'Let's pick up on the Pendleton way' as we turn this around."

said. "We learned that there was a need for at least 150 early child care slots. During the coronavirus pandemic the school district did a survey of K-12 kids and their survey also came around 150."

Brown said 20% of child care in Oregon has closed because of the pandemic and has not reopened.

"Our goal right now is to get 150 kids," she said.

Wyden, who sits as the chair of the Senate Finance Committee, explained that infrastructure spending bills have been the committee's focus recently with the writing and passage of

the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, but infrastructure isn't worth much if people aren't using it.

"If you go out and set up a really good transportation project, what happens if people don't have child care and they can't get in their vehicle in the morning and take advantage of that infrastructure?" Wyden asked. "This is something people ask, can we afford it? My message is, we can't afford not to."

Local business and education leaders were in attendance at the event, fielding questions and speaking with Wyden about child care across Oregon.

"One of the best parts of this morning is the business support," he said. "This is a fundamental business productivity issue. If you are interested in getting skilled and trained workers, they're going to ask, 'What am I going to do with my kiddo?' As senator, I'll do everything I can to move the machinery around. Child care is next."

Wyden said the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law didn't include child care, and the lack of support to include child care in legislation was going to change.

Wyden said the tools used to generate funds for the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and the Inflation Reduction Act should be applied to the child care problem nationwide. He said he intended to use it as part of the future of the Senate Finance Committee's approach to child care.

"I think we ought to have programs that provide more direct financial assistance," Wyden said. "Ask your elected officials who are running at every level of government. This is not a partisan thing. It's really important to our community that we deal with this child care desert. Ask them, 'What are you going to do to help? ... ask them where they stand on child care.'"

PENDLETON CITY COUNCIL

Uber gets green light to keep rolling in Pendleton

Ride-hailing service has grown from a core of five drivers in June to 18 for Round-Up

By PHIL WRIGHT
East Oregonian

PENDLETON — The Pendleton City Council gave Uber drivers the green light to keep going.

The council in April approved a "Vehicle for Hire" ordinance that allowed taxi and ride-hailing services to coexist but also put in place a clause to sunset the local law after five months. The council at its meeting Tuesday night, Oct. 4, had to decide what action to take on that sunset.

The council voted 8-0 to end the trial period and make ride-hailing a permanent service.

Alicia Reynen, who with her

A REMEMBRANCE

Pendleton City Councilor Carole Innes at the start of the meeting Tuesday, Oct. 4, took a moment to acknowledge Rex Morehouse of Pendleton, who died Oct. 1. He was 83. "Rex was very much a part of every city council meeting and

certainly was a good citizen," she said.

Innes said while the two would disagree on issues, it was respectful, and she credited Morehouse with his participation in the community.

Morehouse also was a regular contributor of letters to the editor to the East Oregonian.

husband Jesse, pushed for Uber to operate in Pendleton. She said it was months of fighting to get this outcome.

"I want to cry because I'm happy it happened," she said.

Setting the meeting stage

Matthew and Rod Johlke, the owners of Elite Taxi Inc., Pendleton's only taxi service, have opposed ride-hailing services,

arguing it would harm them financially and ride-hails could not provide all the services the community needs. They even registered Let'er Uber LLC on Aug. 8 with the Oregon Secretary of State's Office, a move they never explained to the public.

City Finance Director Linda Carter on Aug. 19 sent the Johlkes a letter stating if they disagreed with Uber operating at any level

of hours, the council would need to review the company's complete financials for the six months prior to April 1 and also for the span from April 1 to Sept. 20, and she would need that by Sept. 26 for review.

"Those financials must be compiled by an outside independent accountant for the company as a whole at your expense," Carter stated in the letter. "We will require complete financial disclosure to be able to determine whether Uber is a severe detriment to your business for council consideration."

She also said it would be up to city attorney Nancy Kerns to determine if the records were public or not.

Rod Johlke sent a response Sept. 19 that did not include any financial information but did ask for a six-month extension of the trial period.

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