

Appeal Tribune

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County offices hit by COVID-19 outbreak

Employees were forced to return full-time in July

Bill Poehler Salem Statesman Journal
USA TODAY NETWORK

When Emily Canela started working as a case manager for children with intellectual developmental disabilities with Marion County's Health and Human Services department three years ago, she liked the job and intended to work for the county for decades.

But then COVID-19 hit. The county for more than a year allowed many employees to work re-

motely to help slow the spread of the virus. But it forced all employees to return to the office on a full-time basis July 19.

Canela came back to the county's office on Center Street in Salem. Days later, a workplace outbreak of COVID-19 started at the office. It has since grown.

Canela quit Sept. 1. "You don't feel valued. You feel disposable. It's a terrible feeling," Canela said. "And I know that morale is so low in the office right now. We've had

multiple people quit, especially on the third floor where I was working. "I can't take these chances anymore."

The union that represents about 1,000 Marion County employees, SEIU Local 503, has filed an unfair practice complaint with the state's employment relations board, alleging the county refuses to bargain about workers' ability to telecommute.

A Marion County spokesperson did not return messages for comment

about the complaint.

Marion County is one of the few public agencies that has required workers to return to the office.

According to a city spokesperson, Salem offers remote work to eligible city employees regardless of the pandemic. The state, though the Department of Administrative Services, had planned to reopen state offices Sept. 1, but those plans were delayed due to the rise of delta variant of COVID-19, according to Charles Boyle, a spokesperson for Gov. Kate Brown.

Outbreaks have been reported at

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Jim Bornzin, 80, of Silverton, has been creating scissor-cut art for decades. His work will be featured in a show at the Silverton Arts Center Sept. 10-26, 2021. GEOFF PARKS/SPECIAL FOR THE STATESMAN JOURNAL

SCISSOR-CUT ART

Silverton artist finds relaxation, escape in intricate work

Geoff Parks
Special to Salem Statesman Journal
USA TODAY NETWORK

Jim Bornzin just turned 80, but he retains the youthful look and energy of a man just coming into his own creatively.

He has put together a collection of 45 of his unique scissor-cut works of art to be displayed at the Silverton Arts Center's Borland Gallery from Sept. 10-26.

Scissor-cut art originated in Switzerland and Germany as Scherenschnitte, a distinctive art of paper cutting and design that was brought to colonial America in the late 1700s. Bornzin was led to the technique by a relative and, while studying for the ordained Lutheran ministry, worked steadily in his free time to complete his first scissor-cut.

"When I was a pastor, it would sometimes take me a month or two to finish a scissor-cut because I would just pick it up for an hour or two, and then put it down," he said, adding that he uses the art as a form of escape, relaxation and artistic expression.

"I still like that about that art because the picture is drawn on the paper and I can get at it for an hour and



"Heron" is one of Jim Bornzin's works of scissor-cut art that will be featured in a show at the Silverton Arts Center Sept. 10-26, 2021. COURTESY OF JIM BORNZIN

Oregon workers file suit over vaccine mandates

Connor Radnovich Salem Statesman Journal
USA TODAY NETWORK

Six Oregon workers filed a lawsuit in federal court Friday asserting the state has no standing to force its COVID-19 vaccine mandates upon them because they already have "natural" immunity to the virus.

The lawsuit additionally maintains that Oregon's COVID-19 vaccine mandates for health care workers, school staff and executive branch employees infringe upon the plaintiffs' constitutionally protected rights to privacy and due process.

People who work in Oregon in those fields are re-



Janie Lopez is injected with the second dose of the Pfizer vaccine during a COVID-19 vaccination clinic. BRIAN HAYES / STATESMAN JOURNAL

quired to be fully vaccinated by Oct. 18, according to executive orders Gov. Kate Brown issued in August. Individuals who are unvaccinated and want to receive a two-shot vaccination needed to receive their first shot by Sept. 9 to qualify as "fully vaccinated" in time.

The lawsuit asks the court to place an injunction on

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Marion-Polk region awarded \$3.7 million to fight youth homelessness

Dianne Lugo
Salem Statesman Journal
USA TODAY NETWORK

In Marion and Polk county, 70% of unsheltered adults reported also experiencing homelessness as a youth.

The region has now been awarded an additional \$3.7 million in federal funds for efforts to end and prevent youth homelessness.

Mid-Willamette Valley's Homeless Alliance announced the award from the U.S Department of Housing and Urban Development's Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program. A total of \$142 million was awarded nationwide.

"The alliance is thrilled to receive this grant," Keizer Mayor Cathy Clark, board chair of the alliance, said in a news release.

Thousands without access

The need for resources for homeless youth in Marion and Polk counties is dire.

"Youth homelessness, the way that it affects people's brains as a youth...the trauma and fight or flight mode really makes it a risk factor for homelessness later in life as an adult," Carla Munns, with the Mid-Willamette Valley Homeless Alliance, said. "Intervening now at this youth age is really instrumental in ending and preventing adult homelessness."

Nearly 2,000 Marion-Polk public school students are homeless, according to an analysis by the alliance.

Twelfth grade had the highest number of homeless students by grade level, according to the August report and they experienced homelessness 38% more than the second-highest grade level, tenth grade.

In 2019-2020, Falls City School District in Polk County had the highest percentage of homeless students in all of Oregon. There, nearly one in four of their students were experiencing homelessness (44 of 190).

Munns notes that these numbers only include public schools and children who felt safe enough to identify themselves as housing insecure.

"A lot of families, especially those that are undocumented, don't want to be in any programs," she said.

The youth enrolled and identified as housing insecure have limited access to services, especially in Polk County.

"There's no shelter for youth in Polk County at all and then there's no shelter for youth in rural Marion," Munns said. "We just have two programs that will house youth right now as a shelter (in Salem)."

One of those programs is H.O.S.T, part of Northwest Human Services at 1143 Liberty St NE. The other is the HOME Youth and Resource Center with the Community Action Agency.

There is also Youth Era, a drop-in program in Salem. But the program does not house youth overnight.

"We have a major gap," Munns said.

As Clark describes in the announcement, the grant could be a "game-changer" for the region.

Six months to develop plan

Marion and Polk were one of 33 local communities selected to receive the grant funding. Nearly 100 applications were submitted for funding consideration. According to a HUD release, the department's Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program supports housing programs including rapid rehousing, permanent supportive housing, transitional housing and host homes.

"We have a responsibility in our nation to care for all our children and with this funding, HUD is taking steps to make sure that every child under our care has a safe place to call home," Secretary Marcia L. Fudge said in the release.

The alliance will now have six months to decide exactly how to spend the money and create a coordinated community plan around ending and preventing youth homelessness in the region.

Eugene, Springfield/Lane County was awarded \$3.3 million through the same program and will develop its own plan.

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