

ENROLLMENT: Many students live in district but don't attend

Continued from page 1

ADM (average daily membership — a number that does not correspond exactly to per-student funding, since some students are counted differently for funding purposes). Coming in 12 students below projections means the district would come up short in expected state funding to the tune of roughly \$90,576. Yet, the numbers can shift, even in the middle of the year.

Superintendent Curt Scholl cautioned that it is too early to assess any impact on budget or staffing.

"We do not know if this will be the total impact, however," he said. "Last year we gained 25 students after the first couple months of school, which drastically reduced the financial impact of the enrollment drop."

Numbers at Sisters High School are actually up, with nine additional students added since the end of the 2016-17 school year, for a total of 441 across four grades. Sisters Middle School is down just slightly, with 6.5 fewer students, totaling 321. Sisters Elementary School saw the biggest drop in student population, 16 down from the end

of last year, and falling 36 students below projections.

School board member Jay Wilkins noted that projections for the size of the second-grade class were way off, which skewed the numbers.

"The projections going forward have to be more realistic," he said.

Sisters Elementary School currently has 307 students enrolled.

Enrollment in Sisters schools has been on a declining trend for several years. Because each family's circumstance is different and a handful of families with several children can affect numbers significantly in a small district, it's hard to pinpoint exact causes of an enrollment decline. Lack of housing and economic opportunities for young families is widely considered to be a significant factor.

"I think the drop in elementary enrollment says more about our community struggle of affordable housing and family-wage-earning jobs," said Scholl. "This tends to have a bigger impact on young families. These are the factors I would attribute the decline to in Sisters."

And, while Sisters offers a variety of innovative programs, there are other innovative programs online and through charter academies that compete for Sisters' students.

Home-schooling also plays a role.

The environment for traditional "brick-and-mortar" schools is much more competitive today than in years past.

"It used to be that if you lived in this zip code, you went to this school," Wilkins said.

Now, families, as education consumers, have options.

Wilkins notes that there are 96 eligible students in the Sisters School District who go to school elsewhere or in a non-SSD format. As of September, he calculates that 40 students are home-schooled; 20 attend the Baker Web Academy; 16 attend Redmond schools (some of those because it's geographically closer); 11 attend Black Butte School in Camp Sherman; and four go to Bend for school.

Sisters receives 67 inter-district transfers — 51 from Redmond; one from Black Butte; and 15 from Bend.

Sisters doesn't have access to numbers from Redmond Proficiency Academy, which

also competes for students.

Wilkins says that families choose other alternatives for a variety of reasons.

"I think there's been some bad customer service experiences in the past," he said.

Some students have demanding pursuits outside of school and other options are more flexible.

"Our response to that is being much more student-centered," Wilkins said. "We may not be able to [do everything] for everybody — but can we work with students?"

Sisters also offers online education and can offer some flexibility to students who are traveling or pursuing other activities.

"They can be an Outlaw," Wilkins said. "How do we emphasize that, fine-tune it, and repeat that?"

Wilkins is serving with fellow board member Stephen King and Superintendent Scholl on a committee tasked to "get after the marketing program on a more formal basis."

Wilkins believes the district should focus first on bringing back into the fold students who live here already, but who aren't enrolled in SSD. Then the district can work on attracting other students in, and work with the City of Sisters and other entities on the structural issues with housing and employment opportunities that put a damper on the ability of young families to move here and make a go of it in Sisters schools.

The Peaks at Pine Meadow Village
 Four units under construction.
 1,200-1,400+ sq. ft., single-car garage, energy efficient with a modern edge.
\$369,000-\$379,000.
 Exclusively offered by...

 Ali Mayea & Jill A. Jarkesy
 541-588-6007 | 401 E. Main Ave.
 alimayea@bendcable.com
SISTERS HOMELAND REALTY


KICKOFF TO SAVINGS
 UP TO **\$5,000**
TOWARD SELECT INVENTORY

 NOW THROUGH NOVEMBER 30TH

 VILLAGE AT COLD SPRINGS
 New Home Star Oregon, LLC CCB# OR-172526

BISON CONSTRUCTION

GENERAL CONTRACTOR
 Carpentry • Tile • Drywall • Painting
 541-390-0769 | Sisters Owned | CCB#209860

Superior Escrow Execution
Ultimate Service

 Stop by and visit with Tiana Van Landuyt & Shelley Marsh.
 220 S. Pine St., Ste. 102 | 541-548-9180

Happy Acres Pumpkin Giveaway and Coloring Contest!
 Sunday, October 15 from 1 to 4 p.m. at our downtown Sisters office!
 Stroll over after you're done at Harvest Fair.

LEGACY REALTY
 WWW.LEGACY.PROPERTY
 282 Cedar St., Sisters (Behind Hop-n-Brew)
 Debbie Brown/Broker
 541-419-8156
 Lic#200511204

Experience the Beauty of Autumn at The Ranch!

Three New Golf Course Listings!

 GLAZE MEADOW 300
 Starry nights from the deck hot tub~
 \$849,000 • mls 201709327

 GOLF HOME 13
 Ideal location on the 7th Fairway~
 \$779,000 • mls 201709572

 GLAZE MEADOW 301
 This home defines elegance~
 \$987,000 • mls 201710090

We're your neighbors...
 Exclusive Onsite Realtor — and over half our agents live here!

 Don Bowler • Gary Yoder • Dick Howells • Phil Arends • Carol Dye • Joe Dye • Ross Kennedy
Come see us! Open from 9 to 5 daily, adjacent to the Lodge Pool Complex
 541-595-3838 | View all our listings at howellsrealtygroup.com