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Securing employment, discovering confidence

■ CHD employment program matches clients with ideal employers

By Amanda Weisbrod
The Observer

Searching for a job can be intimidating for anyone, but for those with anxiety, depression or other behavioral health issues, it can be even more of an insurmountable task. Luckily, the Center for Human Development has a program dedicated to supporting its clients in both finding and holding a job.

The Supported Employment Program at CHD helps clients look for an occupation that would best suit them and their behavioral health needs, assists in the application and interview process, and follows up with them during their employment to make sure everything is going smoothly. Anyone seeking job application assistance can apply for the program by visiting CHD and completing a pre-screen-



Nickel, right, helps EOU freshman Katie Jo Gebhardt complete a food order Wednesday night.

ing questionnaire.

Julie Fletcher, an employment and education specialist at CHD, said the program currently supports 40 clients and has a waitlist of at least 30 more, but she still encourages people to apply because spots are constantly opening.

"At the Supported Employment Program, job appointments are customized to the client's needs," she said. "It's very client driven, but we also get to know employers to pair

them better with employees."

Kory Escobar, who works alongside Fletcher as another employment and education specialist at CHD, highlighted the individual placement mindset as the program's defining quality.

"This isn't a normal job placement program," he said. "We find jobs that clients are interested in doing. Sometimes employers will even carve out special positions based on a particular client's skills."

"Finding and getting a job were aspects I lacked before coming to the program... The CHD gives me the support I need to succeed."

— Monica Nickel, EOU student

Monica Nickel, 22, is a freshman at Eastern Oregon University studying creative
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EOU officials wary of proposed bill

■ Senate Bill 3 would allow community colleges to offer 4-year degree programs

By Dick Mason
The Observer

A bill in the state Legislature that would allow Oregon community colleges to create four-year degree programs has Eastern Oregon University officials concerned but not alarmed.

"We have known for a long time that this was coming, and we are watching it carefully," said Tim Seydel, Eastern's vice president for university advancement.

Senate Bill 3 would permit the state's community colleges in certain circumstances to develop applied baccalaureate degree programs. The Senate passed the bill Feb. 19 and it is now in the House.

Eastern officials are concerned that the passage of Senate Bill 3 could result in community colleges creating degree programs similar to those of their institution. This would put EOU in competition with community colleges for students.

Former EOU President Dixie Lund, now a member of the university's board of trustees, believes the chances of this occurring are minimized by the strong relationship EOU has had with community colleges throughout the state for decades.

"We have an excellent partnership with many community colleges," Lund said.
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Senate passes state Medicaid funding bill

■ Gov. Brown expected to sign bill into law

By Amanda Weisbrod
The Observer

The Oregon Legislature passed a \$465 million funding bill for the Oregon Health Plan, Oregon's Medicaid program, over the next six years.



House Bill 2010 passed with bipartisan votes in the Senate Thursday after the House approved it last week. Next, HB 2010 moves to Gov. Kate Brown, who is expected to sign it into law.

The bill finds funding from several health care taxes, including the hospital provider tax and a health insurance premium tax. The Oregon Association of Hospitals and Health Systems celebrated the bill's passage in the Senate.

"The funding package passed represents a carefully negotiated set of agreements brought forward by the Governor and further refined with a core set of stakeholders over many months prior to session," said Andy Van Pelt, executive vice president of OAHHS, in a press release. "Other components of the package will come before the Legislature in coming months and hospitals will continue to advocate for their passage to fully and sustainably fund the Medicaid program in Oregon."

While Grande Ronde Hospital gave no official comment on the passing of HB 2010, Mardi Ford, director of communications and marketing at GRH, said the hospital's philosophy aligns with the following statement made by Van Pelt in the same press release.

"Oregon's hospitals applaud the passage of HB 2010," he said. "Hospitals have been supporters of the Medicaid budget for 15 years. In this biennium, via the hospital provider tax, hospitals are on track to contribute nearly 28 percent of the state funds required to fully fund the Oregon Health Plan. Given that nearly one in four Oregonians relies on Medicaid for health care coverage, hospitals feel it is deeply important that our state continues its commitment to these vulnerable families and individuals." ■



Elgin Mayor Allan Duffy, left, shakes Dawson Larman's hand after he swore in the 16-year-old as the city's new student councilor.

Looking up and giving back

■ Elgin's new student councilor hopes to be a role model for other students by serving his community

By Amanda Weisbrod
The Observer

Role models can be as fictional as a super strong, colorful-span-dex-wearing superhero, or as visceral as a celebrity, athlete or police officer. It all depends on the person looking up.

Elgin's new student councilor, Dawson Larman, is lucky enough to have his hero right at home.

"My dad is definitely my role model," he said. "I've always seen him trying to do his best with ev-



Larman

erything he does, and that makes me want to be a better person."

The Elgin City Council swore in Larman, 16, as student councilor at

its regular meeting Feb. 12 after accepting his application with a unanimous vote. Larman, son of Elgin's public works director, Dan Larman, said he finds inspiration for his own community in-

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New sidewalk to make walking to Central safer

By Dick Mason
The Observer

Walking to and from Central Elementary School is about to get safer for children and their parents.

An 850-foot sidewalk along H Avenue between La Grande's Central Elementary, at the corner of H and Second Street, and Sunset Drive, just below Grande Ronde Hospital, is set to be installed later this year.

"It will be great for the whole community," said George Mendoza, superintendent of the La Grande School District, who discussed the sidewalk at a meeting of the

La Grande School Board on Wednesday.

Mendoza said the need for the sidewalk is obvious when one sees the number of cars parked along H Avenue after school. The vehicles of parents picking up their children parked on H Avenue often stretch west from Central all the way to Sunset Drive. Currently, children and their parents have to walk over ground that is often wet and spongy to get to and from Central. The superintendent also noted the convenience of a five-foot-wide sidewalk will mean fewer people will be walking



Dick Mason/The Observer

The new sidewalk will be on the north side of H Avenue near EOU.

on H Avenue to avoid wet ground.

The sidewalk will be installed by the City of La Grande, which received federal funds for the project via a Safe Routes to School grant. School districts cannot apply for Safe Routes to School grants but mu-

nicipalities, such as cities and counties, can, said City of La Grande Public Works Director Kyle Carpenter. The City of La Grande received a Safe Routes to School grant of \$140,000 for the sidewalk project. The city, Carpenter
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WEATHER Full forecast on the back of B section

Tonight
34 LOW
Mostly cloudy

Friday
45/37
A little rain

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La Grande, Oregon

Email story ideas
to news@lagrandeobserver.com.
More contact info
on Page 4A.



MONDAY EATING ORGANIC MAY REDUCE CANCER RISK

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