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Good day to our valued subscriber Charlotte Wood of La Grande

Report tackles police profiling

■ Report paints complex picture while calling out one city for its disparities

By Jake Thomas
Oregon Capital Bureau

SALEM — Most of Oregon's largest police departments are slightly more likely to cite or arrest minorities during traffic and pedestrian stops, but the disparity isn't significant enough to warrant further scrutiny, according to a new state report.

However, the report singled out the Portland Police Bureau for its disparate treatment of African Americans.

The Oregon Criminal Justice Commission on Sunday issued its first-ever report examining data from the state's 12 largest police agencies for evidence of racial disparities in traffic and pedestrian stops. The analysis, based on data from nearly 400,000 stops between July of 2018 and June of 2019, was mandated by the Legislature in 2017. A review of smaller agencies is next.

Ken Sanchagrin, commission deputy director, said that the report evaluated why each person was stopped, their race and whether they were searched, arrested or given a warning. Sanchagrin said that the Portland Police Bureau was the only agency to warrant further examination by the commission.

"I was frankly pleasantly surprised that we didn't find a lot of systematic issues," said Sanchagrin.

But state Sen. Lew Frederick, D-Portland, called the report concerning because it highlighted longstanding issues.

"I don't think that's a minor situation at all," said Frederick. "These are issues we have been trying to deal with for some time."

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UNION COUNTY

LIBRARIES FIND VALUE IN FINES

■ 8% of libraries nationwide have stopped charging patrons for late returns



Staff photo by Sabrina Thompson

A patron returns books through the slot outside of the Cook Memorial Library, La Grande. The local public library is considering joining a national trend of eliminating fines for late returns.



Staff photo by Sabrina Thompson

A patron peruses through a book Tuesday at Cook Memorial Library in La Grande. Public libraries provide service for all to use. The cost of fines, however, can be a barrier to some.

By Sabrina Thompson, The Observer

LA GRANDE — *The majority of local libraries are holding on to the tradition of fines for overdue materials. But for how much longer remains a question.*

Returning a book or other items days late means a fee on your library account. Most of these fees do not exceed 10 cents a day, but with each passing day, the cost adds up. Some libraries are dumping overdue fines. According to a survey in the Library Journal, 8% of libraries across the nation have stopped charging patrons for not returning books on time.



Roberson

"When you have fines, you are making the library less accessible to those who benefit the most from using it," Cook Memorial Library director Kip Roberson said. "According to studies that are being published in library journals, fines hurt low income people and children the most. These are also the people using our libraries as part of their personal development, and with fines they can't access these services."

Local libraries cap fines at a maximum of \$5 on the account, and prohibit checking out more materials and using library services until the fines go below the threshold.

"There is a fear and stigma around overdue fines," Roberson said. "People are afraid it will get above an amount they can pay, or that the librarian will yell at them."

However, Roberson explained, many librarians are very understanding, and the most important thing to the library is getting back the materials. On a case by case basis, librarians may forgive fines, depending on the circumstance that went into the late return.

La Grande's Cook Memorial Library is considering eliminating late fines in the coming year, Roberson said, a decision that would ultimately come from the La Grande City Council.

Doing away with fines raises the concern people won't return the materials at all. However, according to a study conducted by the Library Journal, a majority of libraries that have eliminated fines still receive their materials.

The Cove Public Library does not charge overdue fines, while the Union Carnegie Public Library, Elgin Public Library and Cook Memorial Library do. The all-volunteer Library Improvement Club runs the library in Cove. Improvement Club member Yvonne Oliver said the volunteers have chosen not to have late book fines for the last 15 years. These libraries still charge fines for lost and damaged books. The North Powder City Library did not

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Helping students without a home

By Dick Mason
The Observer

LA GRANDE — The number of students in Union County school districts lacking stable shelter and food has gone down, but even one "homeless" student is too many, according to local educators.

Oregon Department of Education classified a total of 176 students in the La Grande, Imbler and North Powder school districts in 2018-19 as homeless. The La Grande School District had 153 homeless students in 2018-19, according to the department's latest homeless student count, while North Powder had 14 and Imbler had nine.

Homeless students, as defined by the Oregon Department of Education under the federal McKinney-Vento Act, are those who are living in a shelter; are unsheltered, which means they are living in cars, trailers, tents or substandard housing; living in a hotel; sharing housing with another family; or are living with someone other than their legal guardian.

Kathleen McCall, the La Grande School District's youth in transition liaison, said the school district's homeless numbers are down from previous years.

"They fluctuate. As our economy does better, so do our families. We are seeing less homelessness right now, and we are grateful for that," McCall said.

La Grande High School Principal Brett Baxter said the plight of his school's homeless students is always on the minds of his faculty and staff, who passionately want to reach out to them.

"They dig deep to meet the needs of students," Baxter said.

The principal noted that earlier this school year his staff learned of two LHS students who were living with several children and three adults in a residence without furniture. Faculty and staff stepped forward to provide the home with

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Antonio Martinez of Beaverton stopped at the Deadman Pass rest area to stretch his legs, and Korra, his 4-year-old tabby, slipped out. Two months later, they reunited.

Submitted photo



Man's cat found after 2 months at rest area

■ Samaritans, tech plays key roles in bringing Korra home

By Kathy Aney
EO Media Group

PENDLETON — Antonio Martinez had only a glimmer of hope he would ever see his cat again.

Two months ago, he stopped at

the Deadman Pass rest area 18 miles east of Pendleton to stretch his legs. He and his father had driven from Texas and were on their way to Beaverton where Antonio was moving. Korra, his 4-year-old tabby cat, had meowed unhappily the entire trip. When Martinez got out, his cat saw her chance, slipping unseen through the open door.

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Tonight
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Thursday
41/36
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