

Our View

Oregon must work on child care issues

Now is the time to start thinking of creative ways to solve our child care crisis as we rebuild our economy that has been so damaged by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The lack of child care in rural Oregon has been a problem for decades. We live in a “child care desert.” And COVID-19 is making the problem worse. Much worse.

It’s not just a problem for the parents of young children. It’s a problem for all of us.

It’s a problem for child care providers who aren’t able to earn enough to support their own families.

It’s a problem for young children, who don’t have the opportunity to socialize and learn with other children and caregivers in safe, loving and educational environments.

It’s a problem for working parents, who increasingly have to juggle work and child care, especially if they have an infant, toddler or preschooler needing constant supervision.

It’s a problem for business owners and institutions who employ working parents, especially if a parent’s work hours coincide with online school hours.

It’s a problem for K-12



Children attend day care in May 2020 at Central Elementary School in La Grande. While certain day care providers can operate during the COVID-19 crisis, child care is a pressing issue in Oregon.

teachers, whose students may not have an adult around to make sure they get online at the appropriate time each day.

It’s a problem for colleges and universities. If students with young children don’t have child care options, they are likely to drop out or postpone their higher education.

Ultimately, it’s a problem for our economy and society as a whole. Without child

care, parents who would ordinarily be working will drop out of the workforce.

More families dependent on food stamps and public assistance. More children living in poverty. More adults unable to get the education, training or work they need to fulfill their dreams.

Fewer children getting enriching preschool experiences between birth and age

5. Fewer children ready for kindergarten.

It’s well documented that children who aren’t ready for kindergarten are likely to fall behind as the years go by. They are far more likely to drop out of high school and live in poverty as adults.

In the year ahead, assuming we get COVID-19 under control and our economy starts to reopen, we

want to see Oregon’s Early Learning Division helping to facilitate quality child care options for working parents at the local level.

Rather than just making and enforcing child care regulations, we want to see this state agency actively supporting the creation of new child care options.

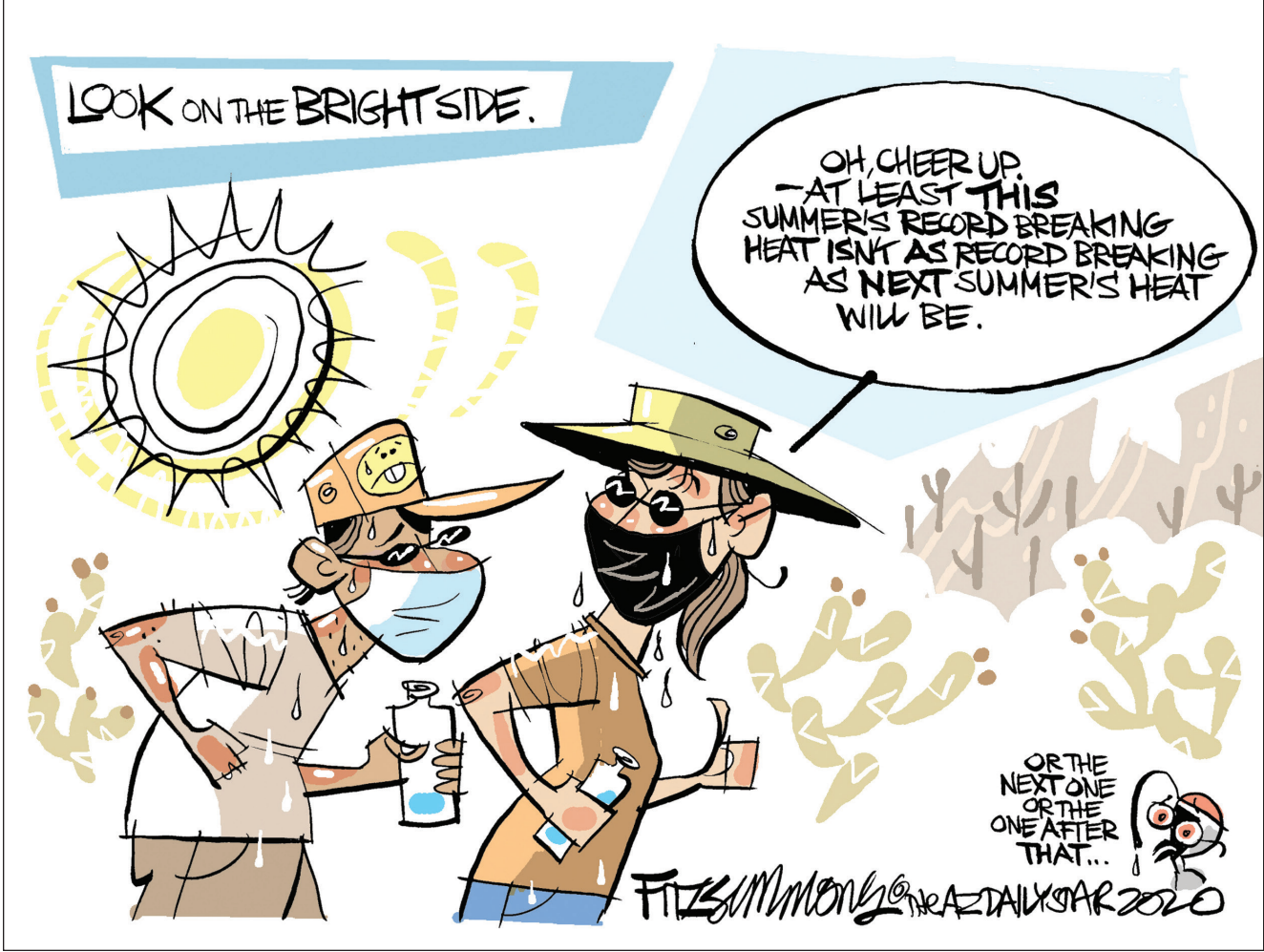
This could mean helping a group of parents form a cooperative, taking turns caring for each other’s children.

It could mean supporting businesses that want to hire a child care provider to care for employees’ children on-site.

It could mean letting a city parks and recreation program set up child care in an otherwise unused recreation center.

It could mean allowing a community college to use unused classroom space for infant and toddler care — with early childhood education students providing some of the care under the supervision of experienced providers.

We can’t revive our economy without the availability of quality, affordable child care. And we have to be willing to pay child care providers more for the crucial job they do — helping nurture and teach the children who are our future.



Contact your public officials

U.S. PRESIDENT Donald Trump The White House 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW Washington, DC 20500 Comments: 202-456-1111	GOVERNOR Kate Brown 160 State Capitol 900 Court Street Salem, OR 97301-4047 503-378-4582
U.S. SENATORS Ron Wyden 221 Dirksen Senate Office Bldg. Washington, DC 20510 202-224-5244 La Grande office: 541-962-7691 Jeff Merkley 313 Hart Senate Office Building Washington, DC 20510 202-224-3753 Pendleton office: 541-278-1129	REPRESENTATIVES Greg Barreto, District 58 900 Court St. NE, H-38 Salem, OR 97301 503-986-1458 Rep.GregBarreto@state.or.us Greg Smith, District 57 900 Court St. NE, H-482 Salem, OR 97301 503-986-1457 Rep.GregSmith@state.or.us
U.S. REPRESENTATIVE Greg Walden 185 Rayburn House Office Building Washington, DC 20515 202-225-6730 La Grande office: 541-624-2400	SENATOR Bill Hansell, District 29 900 Court St. NE, S-423 Salem, OR 97301 503-986-1729 Sen.BillHansell@state.or.us

Write to us

Mail: The Observer, 911 Jefferson Ave., La Grande 97850
Email: news@lagrandeobserver.com
• The Observer welcomes letters to the editor. We edit letters for brevity, grammar, taste and legal reasons.
We will not publish consumer

complaints against businesses, personal attacks against private individuals or comments that can incite violence. We also discourage thank-you letters.
• Letters should be no longer than 350 words and must be signed and carry the author’s name, address and phone number

(for verification only). We will not publish anonymous letters.
• Letter writers are limited to one letter every two weeks.
• Longer community comment columns, such as My Voice, must be no more than 700 words. Writers must provide a recent headshot (a decent and in-focus

selfie is fine) and a one-sentence biography.
Like letters to the editor, columns must refrain from complaints against businesses or personal attacks against private individuals.
Submissions must carry the author’s name, address and

phone number.
• The Observer also is looking for local monthly columnists to comment on local issues or topics that matter to northeast Oregon.
• Submission does not guarantee publication, which is at the discretion of the editor.

SUBSCRIPTION INFORMATION

SUBSCRIBE AND SAVE

NEWSSTAND PRICE: \$1.50

You can save up to 34% off the single-copy price with home delivery.

Call 541-963-3161 to subscribe.

Subscription rates per month:

Union & Wallowa Co.\$11.80

By mail, all other U.S.\$15

THE OBSERVER

An independent newspaper founded in 1896

www.lagrandeobserver.com

Periodicals postage paid at Pendleton, Oregon 97801
Published Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays (except postal holidays) by EO Media Group, 911 Jefferson Ave., La Grande, OR 97850 (USPS 299-260)

The Observer retains ownership and copyright protection of all staff-prepared news copy, advertising copy, photos and news or ad illustrations. They may not be reproduced without explicit prior approval.

COPYRIGHT © 2020

Phone: 541-963-3161

Toll free (Oregon): 1-800-781-3214

Email: news@lagrandeobserver.com

POSTMASTER
Send address changes to:
The Observer,
911 Jefferson Ave.,
La Grande, OR 97850

STAFF

Regional PublisherKarrine Brogoitti

Regional circulation directorKelli Craft

EditorPhil Wright

News clerkLisa Lester Kelly

Sports editorRonald Bond

Reporter.....Dick Mason

Reporter.....Sabrina Thompson

ClassifiedsDevi Mathson

Home delivery advisorAmanda Fredrick

Advertising representativeJuli Bloodgood

Advertising representativeAmy Horn

Graphic design supervisorDorothy Kautz

A division of

eoMEDIA

group