

Local

Locals advocate for Older Americans Act funding

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July 14, 1965 President Lyndon B. Johnson signed into law the Older American's Act (OAA) as part of the Great Society Reform. This act followed closely behind the Civil Rights Act and the Economic Opportunity Act, an eventful time in history.

Ramona Creighton of Baker City is advocating for these programs to remain intact.

The OAA was created in response to concerns regarding the lack of community social services for our Nation's senior citizens. The OAA was the first federal level initiative aimed at providing comprehensive services for older adults. It created the National Aging Network comprising the Administration on Aging on the federal level, State Units on Aging, and Area Agencies on Aging at the local level.

The network provides funding, based primarily on the percentage of an area's population 60 and older, for nutrition and supportive home and community-based services, disease prevention/health promotion services, elder rights programs, the National Family Caregiver Support Program, and the Native American Caregiver Support Program.

Funding for many of the programs included in the Great Society Reform suffered during the Vietnam War and the structured programs and agencies began dismantling as other administrations took over. Some programs, such as Medicare and Medicaid that fall under the umbrella of the OAA survived and continue to survive.

The OAA states its purpose is to ensure equal opportunity to the fair and free enjoyment of adequate

income in retirement; the best possible physical and mental health services without regard to economic status; suitable housing; restorative and long term care; opportunity for employment; retirement in health, honor, and dignity; civic, cultural, educational and recreational participation and contribution; efficient community services; immediate benefit from proven research knowledge; freedom, independence, and the exercise of self-determination; and protection against abuse neglect and exploitation. In 2006 congress reauthorized the act in its entirety. But these federally mandated programs are at risk of being cut.

Creighton wrote in an email, "These programs, mandated federally, provide a range of home and community based services to help seniors stay as independent as possible in their homes and in their communities. These services and supports also help seniors avoid unnecessary hospitalization and facility based care, saving federal and state budget dollars."

Creighton points out that some of those programs include supportive services like case management, in-home services, information and referrals for services, family caregiver support, health promotion and disease prevention, elder abuse prevention, senior center services that offer wellness and socialization, transportation, nutrition programs including Meals on Wheels, and senior center group meals.

"Although programs receive federal funding, many states help with these programs, as the benefits are critical to the well-being of growing senior populations," she writes. "However, with a quickly expanding older population funding is losing ground

with the ever increasing need for services. The need is far surpassing available services in all areas of the state and programs are continuing to see high and continually increasing demand.

"In Fact, 500,000 seniors have been served in ways such as 1.6 million home delivered meals that have been provided to seniors via the Meals on Wheels program with another 970,000 meals being provided at senior meal sites. 138,485 rides have been provided to consumers, 20,420 rides with an attendant and 9,718 older American consumers accessed legal services that were made available. A recorded 36,547 units of service were provided by unpaid family caregivers serving seniors, 212,776 hours of homemaker/personal care services have been provided and 47,377 hours of home care services have been provided."

Creighton added, "The Oregon Legislature provided support for these services and supports for Oregon's seniors. Through an investment of \$2 million, it was possible to avoid closure of meal sites in areas around the state, reduction in staff working directly with seniors, wait lists for services and supports, reach out to isolated seniors, avoid elimination of services in many rural areas and avoid limitations on services in urban and rural areas continuing support for Oregon's Seniors. Oregon's seniors are counting on this Legislature to maintain the investment in Oregon's Older Americans Act services and supports. Without maintenance of 2015 these funds, it will be impossible for many areas of the state to maintain the necessary and critical help that is provided to seniors, helping them remain independent and in their own

home and community. The Governor's Recommended Budget included \$2 million in continued funding to support Oregon's seniors through these services and supports. Without this investment, there is a strong potential for a reduction in meals for seniors, support for caregivers, reduction in personal care services and reductions in transportation as well as reduction or elimination of staff. However, there will be no reduction in the demand for services. Protect the independence, dignity, choice and safety for Oregon's seniors. I know we all have parents who cared for us and now it is time we care for them."

Margaret Davidson, Executive Director for Community Connection Northwest said, "The federal money does not pay for the full costs of services, approximately 25 percent is all. The state money to support the OAA is something that is in the Governor's budget and is waiting for the legislature to approve, change it or deny it.

"We encourage people to call our State Senator Ted Ferrioli and State Representative Cliff Bentz to let them know that we'd like them to support the State money for OAA services. We just really want people to know that there is an opportunity for the Oregon Legislature to support these services and if the residents of Baker County could call that would be excellent, gather support for these services."

The current legislative session adjourns by the end of June and although Davidson was unsure of the exact date of the legislative vote she urged, "The sooner people could call or email the better."

Legislative contact information is printed on page four of this issue.

Salt lick

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As the crowd applauded, Valerio said, "The original idea was to make this one 40 feet tall, but we just didn't have enough money to make it happen. I just want to say one more thing and that is sometimes you run into some community members that make something different out of a personal challenge. Because of the vision of Whit, he was able to actually take a personal challenge and turn it into an inspiration to many of us. So I'd really like to recognize Whit for what he has done for all of us to make us think in a bigger and better way."

Deschner then addressed the crowd. "First off, I'd like to take a moment or two of silence for all the artists that we ate today." Only a second later he said, "Okay, that's enough. Recently I had a friend up in Seattle call me. She has Parkinsons, and she said, 'Whit, you wouldn't believe this but these people that we know drove through Baker, Oregon and they have a bronze salt lick down there dedicated to Parkinson's.' I thought, well that's great, it just really spreads the word around. It's very nice to have a community that stands behind all of this. Thank you very much. Thank you for coming today. Oh, one more thing, I'd like you all to stick your head through the hole please."

Trucker found dead at rest area

On June 19, 2015, at about 9:48 a.m., the Oregon State Police Southern Dispatch Center received notification that a commercial truck had been located at the eastbound Deadman's Pass rest area (I84 exit 228) for about five hours.

Another driver stopped and checked the commercial truck, located a suicide note, and called police. Oregon State Police Troopers from Pendleton responded to the rest area. They were contacted by a subject who was geocaching in the area and located the deceased truck driver approximately 100 yards from his truck in a wooded area. Evidence at the scene and evidence discovered during the death investigation were consistent with suicide as the cause of death.

The deceased was identified as Guy S. Kravitz, age 51, of Twin Falls, ID. The investigation is still continuing by the Oregon State Medical Examiner's Office.

Help is available for community members struggling from a mental health crisis and/or suicidal thoughts. Suicide is preventable. If you or someone you know needs help with suicidal thoughts or is otherwise in an immediate mental health crisis, please contact your local crisis help resources.

In addition to local resources in your community, a toll free line is available for Oregon Partnership Lifeline/National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK (1-800-273-8255).

SUV catches air in Hwy. 7 crash

On June 22 at about 08:17 hours, Deputy Eric Colton responded to a motor vehicle crash that occurred on Highway 7 near mile post 49 involving a dump truck/dump trailer and a sport utility vehicle.

The Kenworth Dump truck received damage to the driver front side and the Mercury Sport Utility Vehicle was totaled with damage reaching all around the vehicle. Prior to the crash, the dump truck had been operated by Earlin Bennett Jr. (Baker) and the passenger car was operated by Mary Donald (La Grande.)

Both vehicles were traveling Southbound on Highway 7. Donald attempted to pass the Dump Truck while at the same time, Bennett Jr. was making a left turn. Donald's vehicle collided with the front tire of the dump truck and was airborne for a short distance.

Donald's vehicle crashed into an ODOT sign post that held a screen for the ODOT weigh scales. Bennett Jr.'s turn signal was activated as he made the left turn. Bennett Jr was not injured.

Donald received small facial cuts but denied medical attention. Both vehicles were removed from the scene by tow trucks and were off the roadway and didn't interfere with routine traffic.

Red Cross releases tips on how to beat coming heat wave

With temperatures expected to hit 100 degrees or above the next several days, the American Red Cross has issued some tips for facing the heat.

"High temperatures, humidity and hot, indoor environments can quickly cause heat-related emergencies," said Troy Jenkins, Red Cross Health & Safety training manager. "Excessive heat can lead to sunburn, heat cramps, heat exhaustion and heat stroke."

The Red Cross has some simple steps to help beat the heat:

- Never leave children or pets alone in vehicles. The temperature inside can reach a dangerous level within a few minutes.
- Drink more water than usual - even if you're not thirsty.
- Wear loose-fitting, lightweight, light-colored clothing.
- Avoid working outdoors; if you must do so, take frequent breaks and use the buddy system.
- Check on family, friends and neighbors who do not have air condition-

ing, who spend much of their time alone, or who are more likely to be affected by the heat.

- If possible, bring animals inside. If not, frequently check to ensure they are comfortable and have water and a shady place to rest.
- Community cooling centers are available in Portland metropolitan area. Check with your local county office to locate centers near you.

This weekend temperatures are expected to reach record highs, possibly in the triple digits. And with the increased heat, more and more people will take up swimming to cool themselves off.

"Many people will flock to local lakes, rivers, pools, and the coast," says Brian Hoffmeister, American Red Cross aquatic specialist. "This year Oregon has already experienced a record number of drownings. There are ways to stay safe."

Helpful tips before rushing to pool parties or rivers and lakes this weekend:

- The water is cold. Cold

water can easily lead to hypothermia and put even strong swimmers in a dangerous situation.

- Be careful around moving water which may be much faster and stronger than it appears. This can swiftly push you downstream or exhaust strong swimmers. Be honest with yourself about your swimming abilities.
 - Look before you leap! Don't blindly jump into unfamiliar water. Underwater obstacles can cause significant injury or death. Always jump feet first especially this year with severely low water levels.
 - Never swim alone. Always swim with others, preferably in a supervised or lifeguarded area.
 - Wear a lifejacket. They are simple to use and can prevent most drowning events. Make sure jackets are properly fitted and contain a U.S. Coast Guard Approved label.
 - * Know how to respond to a water emergency. Swimmers in distress need help immediately; reach or throw, don't go. Call 9-1-1.
- Additional resources for

heat waves, and swimming safely in lakes, rivers and streams are available from the American Red Cross.

The free Red Cross Emergency App provides instant access to expert heat safety tips. Users also have the option of receiving alerts for excessive heat watches, warnings and heat advisories.

The Red Cross Pet First Aid App has steps pet owners should take to help keep their furry friends safe during hot weather. People can find the apps in their app store by searching for American Red Cross and at redcross.org/apps.

People can learn how to prevent and respond to heat-related and other emergencies by taking a Red Cross First Aid and CPR/AED or Advance Child Care Training course.

A variety of online and in-class options are available. Course and registration information is available at redcross.org/takeaclass.

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