

## Helping a Burro Find a Home

Two years ago Leslie Seeburger took in and trained a wild burro as part of the Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) Great Burro Turnaround Challenge. The BLM's program captures wild burros and relocates them with volunteer trainers in an effort to help find the burro a permanent home. Seeburger worked with Cali Girl for several months before she was auctioned and sold to benefit the BLM program.

This year Seeburger has once again trained a burro on her small farm on Pebble Creek Road in Vernonia through the BLM relocation program.

Mona Lisa is a two year old jenny burro that came from the 1 million acre Arizona Cibola-Trigo Herd Management Area (HMA) in Yuma County. Mona Lisa was sold at the Oregon State Fair on September 1 to a family in Sherwood.

"Mona Lisa is out of a different herd with a totally different mindset," says Seeburger about the difference between her two charges. "You wouldn't even know you are dealing with same breed of creature."

The wild burros are captured by the BLM in corrals because they wander outside the HMA and create a hazard situation for both motorists and themselves. The Cibola-Trigo HMA is home to both wild burros and horses. The burros and horses share the habitat with bighorn sheep, desert mule deer, rattlesnakes, cou-



Mona Lisa was trained by Leslie Seeburger and sold at the Oregon State Fair on September 7.

gars and coyotes. Mona Lisa was one of 15 burros captured and relocated by the BLM this year.

Seeburger trains the burros for approximately 100 days and teaches them to be handled, to carry a saddle, and navigate an obstacle course. Mona Lisa is excellent at walking across a narrow plank, jumping over barrels and walking through a bed of plastic bottles – a very difficult task for a wild burro. She also is very affectionate and loves to be praised and scratched says

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## School District Responds to Exchange Student Sanctions

Before this school year started the ASSE International Student Exchange Program levied sanctions against the Vernonia School District (VSD) that involves a one year ban that does not allow "ASSE students with basketball listed as an interest on their application... to be placed at Vernonia High School."

At the September 8, 2016 School Board meeting Vernonia School District Superintendent Aaron Miller shared with the School Board his letter to ASSE Executive Director Gwen McNallan, written in response to the sanctions and dated August 17, 2016.

"I find this decision to be extremely discriminatory for our host parents, school, and most importantly our and your exchange students," said Miller in his critical letter.

In a usual school year Vernonia will place between 15 and 20 exchange students with families in the community through the ASSE program, which Miller suggests might be one of the highest rates, per capita, of any school in the country. This year Vernonia was only able to place nine students from ASSE, along with three more from other exchange student programs. "I know of at least four students who were told they could not come here," said Vernonia resident Jeana Gump at the meeting. The Gump family is currently hosting their fifth exchange student in as

many years.

Miller noted in his explanation to the School Board that he believed complaints against the VSD and their basketball programs had been lodged by several districts that compete in the same league as Vernonia. "Surprisingly, many of them are private schools who I believe have recruiting privileges," said Miller.

According to Miller, the Oregon Scholastic Athletic Association (OSAA) has investigated the VSD and found no violations in regards to recruiting or eligibility of exchange student players in their sports programs.

"While having to address these concerns may not have been comfortable for your organization, your investigations have shown no wrong doing, because there is none, and we request you remove these sanctions immediately," stated Miller in his letter to ASSE's McNallan. "We are not looking to have this ruling changed in order to ensure we have basketball players from your program attending our school, but to ensure that ALL of our families and your students have the same opportunities that are available to everyone in the state, and the country."

Miller said the VSD has not received a response from ASSE.

"What has made our program so exemplary is that we are good at

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## Community Action Team: The First 50 Years

### Part 8: Families with new babies get support

By Leanne Murray

Community Action Team (CAT) has been reaching out to the community

in powerful and meaningful ways for 50 years. One program with a particularly long-lasting impact has been in effect for about 20 years: Healthy Families. As part of the Child and Family Development Department at CAT, it focuses on providing extra support and information to pre-natal and new-birth families.

At each visit parents receive support and coaching to cultivate and strengthen a nurturing, positive relationship with their baby so s/he is safe, healthy and learning. This includes information on topics like child development, infant care, parenting skills, and what is going on in the community to support new families. Research shows that the quality of the relationship between a parent and their child is critical for the health, well-being, and later life success.

There are many situations that make a family eligible to receive Healthy Family services. Generally they include circumstances that stretch parents and families too thin: unstable housing, unemployment, rocky relationships, multiple children under five years old, a child with special needs, involvement with the child welfare system, depression, substance abuse, and the lack of natural support systems like extended family or caring neighbors.

CAT's program is part of Healthy Families Oregon, Oregon's largest child abuse and neglect prevention program. The evidence-based home visiting model has shown reductions in child maltreatment and increases in children's readiness for school. Children are most vulnerable to physical abuse and neglect in the first few years of their life, so this is critical. As with most supportive programs at CAT, reaching out sooner is better. Ideally, Healthy Families staff would like to connect with a family during pregnancy, even if it's not the first baby. After the birth of a child, home visitors must start building their relationship with the family within the first 90 days. Typically potential participants are referred to the program by the hospitals, doctors, other CAT programs and community partner agencies like DHS.

Currently there is not a waiting list in Columbia County because CAT recently got a boost in funding through Healthy Families Oregon/America and



(Left to right) Healthy Families Home Visitors Andrea Broadbent, Shelby Wacker, and Kathy Appel.

the Department of Education. The additional resources gave CAT the ability to expand services by hiring two additional home visitors, tripling the amount of staff members in the community. Home visitors have backgrounds in early childhood education with an endorsement in mental health. Additional training is undertaken through a rigorous 120 hour program led by the state. Families answer a new baby questionnaire to give staff an accurate assessment of the strengths the family already has, as well as identifying areas where they have unmet needs. In addition, home visitors make referrals to other CAT programs and community partners for needs that aren't addressed

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