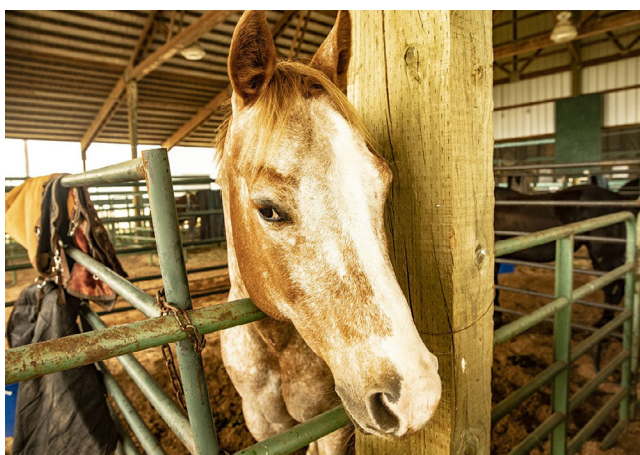


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Columbia Gorge News

HOOD RIVER | THE DALLES | WHITE SALMON

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Learning at a distance

'It's not easy': Families maneuver school, work and equity concerns

By Trisha Walker
Columbia Gorge News

THE 2020-21 ACADEMIC school year is off to an unusual start. The majority of Columbia River Gorge schools opened under a distance learning model in September, first introduced last spring at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. As of press time on Oct. 19, no students from the Hood River County School District, North Wasco County School District 21 or White Salmon Valley School District had returned to in-person classes.

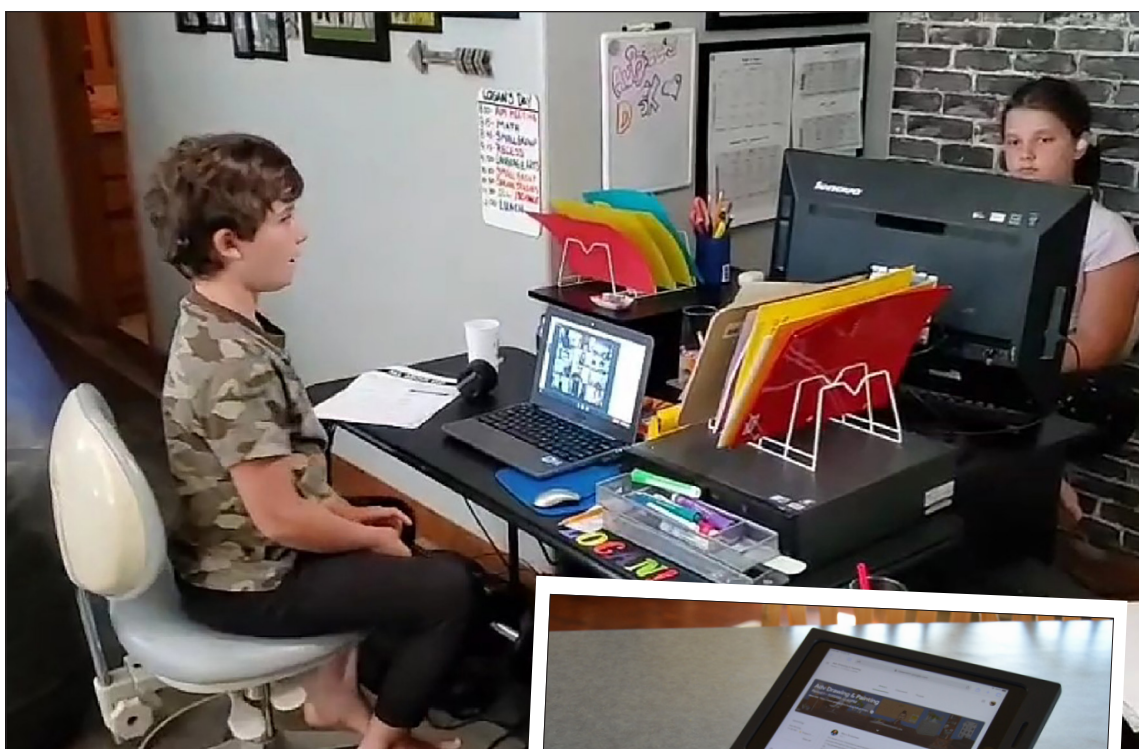
For three Gorge families, distance learning — which requires logging into a remote classroom — has proved challenging, though not without certain rewards.

Cassie Gooding has three students in North Wasco County School District 21: Gavin, 17, is at The Dalles High School, Aubree, 11, is at The Dalles Middle School, and Logan, 8, is at Chenoweth Elementary. The kids' schedules vary — Gavin is in school from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m., Aubree from 8:30 a.m. to noon, and Logan from 8-11:30 a.m., Monday through Friday. Gooding is a dental assistant, working at The Dalles Dental Care (Haley Easing, DMD) and Northern Oregon Endodontics (Scott Edgar, DMD), located in Hood River.

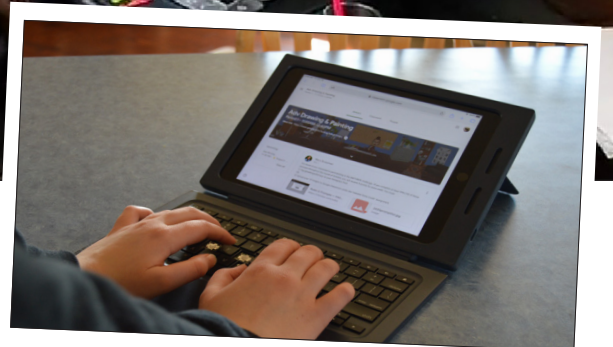
"I have had to greatly adjust my schedule for distance learning, meaning work as I can during the week for Haley and adjust my hours for Dr. Edgar, not being able to be in the office until after the kids are done with school," she said.

Arianne C. Walker has four students in the Hood River County School District: Dylan, 17, and Azrielle, 15, are at Hood River Valley High School, and Aurora, 8, and Anastasia, 5, are at May Street Elementary.

Her elementary students attend classes from 7:50-11:50 a.m. Monday through Friday, but "there are multiple log-in times for each child and the schedule has been evolving weekly," she said. Anastasia has music and PE on a rotating schedule in the afternoons, but "my older kids are doing their classes during that time, so it's not



Above, Logan and Aubree Gooding, both of whom are students in North Wasco County School District 21, work at home at their respective spaces. Below, Hood River County School District students Aurora and Anastasia Maurer study with big sister Azrielle Walker. Submitted photos



really happening," she said.

Dylan, a senior, has zero period, so he logs in from 10:15 a.m. to 3:10 p.m., with a lunch break from 11-11:30 a.m.; Azrielle, a sophomore, has class from 11:30 a.m. to 3:10 p.m. Walker works in sales at Ray Schultens Motors in The Dalles from 8:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Monday through Friday, as well as Saturday by appointment.

"I sometimes need to stay (at the office) later," she said. "I was able to take a couple days off last month to try and help in the very beginning of all of this. Now I'm at work trying to handle it remotely, through phone contact with my children."

Carly Borton has four children, three of whom are in the White Salmon Valley School District: Benjamin, 13, at Hinkle Middle, Gabriel, 10, at Wallace and Pricilla Stevenson Intermediate, and Nathanael, 7, at Whitson Elementary; Samantha, 3, is in daycare.

Borton works from home for Hood River County School District; this year, she is on a temporary job transfer to Hood River Options Academy (HROA) as a full-time math teacher.

"We spend at least three to four hours on and off all day (online),"



she said. "They have the day divided so my youngest goes to school for 45 minutes on Zoom starting at 8 a.m., with a 15-minute enrichment following. Then he has asynchronous (independent) learning the rest of the day that takes him a couple of hours. My fifth grader starts around 9 a.m. and has Zoom meets and asynchronous assignments throughout the day. My eighth grader has Zooms from 12:20-3:30 p.m., and asynchronous in the morning."

Though each family is managing,

they all report a number of difficulties.

Walker said the biggest challenge for her younger children is having to stay engaged online, "especially being at home, where they can get easily distracted between other siblings and pets," she said.

The kids have learning spaces in the kitchen and living room; the little ones have headphones, "but it's still difficult. My youngest wears glasses and when she puts the

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INSIDE LOCAL & STATE ELECTIONS

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BALLOTS GO OUT



Poster in Hood River County Elections office. Kirby Neumann-Rea photo

Time to vote, and vote correctly

By Kirby Neumann-Rea
Columbia Gorge News

General Election Day, and the start of election results week, is just under two weeks away.

Voters in vote-by-mail states Oregon and Washington should have ballots in hand, and the time has come to fill it out, fill it out correctly and return it, say local election officials.

If your ballot for the Nov. 3 election has not arrived, residents should contact their elections office. See *details on page A13*.

Hood River County currently has 15,537 registered voters; in 2016 General Election, the figure was 13,553 registered voters — a 14 percent increase.

Wasco County has 18,390 registered; in 2016 it was 15,613 — a 18 percent increase.

Klickitat County has 15,000 registered; in 2016 it was 13,974 — a 7 percent increase.

"We continue to get a significant number of registration each day, about 15-25 each day," Darlene Johnson, deputy clerk in Hood River County, said in early October.

"I attribute it to an increase in population in the county as well as

See **BALLOTS**, page 13

Youth Center reopens in White Salmon

By Jacob Bertram
Columbia Gorge News

This week, the Community Youth Center in White Salmon is reopening to a limited capacity.

This will be the first time since mid-March the youth center was in operation. The youth center will reopen in a modified format, and at much less capacity than it was operating at before March.

The reopened center will provide care for 10 children from six families who had been registered with the center previously. The families were selected based on need, including single-parent households and families who have experienced layoffs, youth center director Autumn Williams said.

Williams said the center is currently not accepting applications or registering new clients due to capacity concerns. Currently, youth center staff are preparing a waitlist for those who are still searching for childcare options.

"I've got a lot of kids that want to come back but I've got to prioritize. For right now it's got to be people who are more in need," Williams said.

"It might be kind of encouraging for the students to have this kind of classroom-esque environment."

Autumn Williams, director

The youth center's hours of operations have changed as well, now providing care from 8:15 a.m. to 2:30 p.m., Monday through Friday. Williams said this change allows students to participate in remote learning during class time, and also gives parents and guardians a greater block of time during the day when the child is supervised.

With the change in hours of operations, the dietary schedule will also change, Williams said. She said she is planning to provide lunches each day for the children.

Having computer and internet access, Williams said the youth center is ready to support remote learning. Williams said volunteers will be available on a rotating schedule, including a mental health specialist, an arts project tutor, and a math tutor for further support.

Williams said children enrolled with the youth center will



Students socialize ... at a distance ... in the reopened youth center in White Salmon. Jacob Bertram photo

participate in COVID-19 prevention activities, including social distancing, wearing masks at all times, and getting their temperatures taken daily. Parents and guardians will have to sign a weekly questionnaire for the students to be accepted.

Williams said she is hopeful that reopening the youth center, in any capacity, will bring benefits to the youths and children as well as the parents and guardians who

participate in the program.

"It might be kind of encouraging for the students to have this kind of classroom-esque environment," she said.

"I'm hoping the best, it's hard to predict anything. We'll know a lot more once the first week is done," Williams said. "I'm working on my fourth year right now and I feel like I just got this."

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