



Above, Irene Fields, left and Deborah Langlois in the one-act play "Sisters." At left, from left to right, Kathy Williams, Michael Beckner and Kirby Neumann-Rea, in "The Happy Place." The plays will kick off a fundraising campaign for the Hood River Valley Adult Center Oct. 31.

Dan Ball photos

PACT presents one-act plays Oct. 31

Zoom shows lead-up to Adult Center capital campaign

PERFORMANCES AT Adult Center Theater (PACT) presents two one-act plays, via computer, on Oct. 31 in a benefit for the Hood River Valley

Adult Center. Both "Zoom Theater" plays were recorded this summer via Zoom using social distancing, and are directed by Gary Young. The two casts are made up of five actors who have been in a variety of shows in recent years with local theater troupes. Irene Fields and Deborah Langlois appear in "Sisters," a short play about two sisters

and an elusive Peeping Tom, by playwright Kat Meads of Ben Lomond, Calif. In "The Happy Place," by Scottish playwright Jack Dickson, Michael Beckner, Kirby Neumann-Rea and Kathy Williams perform a darkly-humorous tale of relationships and a drug deal gone bad. Performances are 1 p.m., 4 p.m. and 7 p.m. on Oct. 31; join by going to us02web.

zoom.us/j/89364968240, webinar ID 893 6496 8240. There are no "tickets" for this online production (edited by Dan Ball). However, donations are accepted starting Nov. 12 for the Adult Center capital campaign. To donate, go to www.hrvac.org/donate, or mail to HRVAC 2010 Sterling Place, Hood River, OR 97031.

HRCSD targets reopening schools

By Kirby Neumann-Rea
Columbia Gorge News

Hood River County School District is on track to meet Oregon Department of Education (ODE) and Oregon Health Authority's (OHA) health metrics to reopen schools for in-person instruction for students in kindergarten through third grade (K-3) by Nov. 9.

Students in 4-12 grades will remain in Comprehensive Distance Learning (CDL) until Feb. 2, 2021, which coincides with the end of Semester One.

In one encouraging metric, as of Friday, there were no known COVID cases among students or staff in the district, superintendent Rich Polkinghorn told Hood River Rotary during the club's Zoom meeting on Oct. 22.

During the first four weeks of the 2020-21 school year, district students have been learning online. The school district continues to closely monitor COVID-19 data with state and county partners. Each week, HRCSD meets with the Hood River County Health Department staff to review COVID-19 data as it relates to schools reopening. ODE and OHA set health metrics, which are outlined in Ready Schools, Safe Learners, that must be met for a school district to reopen its schools, the district stated in a press release.

"We're doing a lot of tracing among students and staff and doing a lot of planning with safety in mind," Polkinghorn told Rotary. "We are in tight communication with the Health Department. We are on track to open K-3, and that has been met with mixed feelings. People are really anxious about going back to school and many are excited."

Polkinghorn also addressed the question of resuming athletics and activities, which are currently



Rich Polkinghorn

on hold until some level of in-person instruction resumes.

"If we meet the metrics, we are allowed to bring in limited instruction, through academics, and once we start with limited in-person we will start with conditioning for athletes," said Polkinghorn, who originally came to the district as math teacher and wrestling coach.

"As a former athlete I know how important it (athletics) is, we know a lot of kids, the reason they come is sports; we know the need to get them together and connected, but we have to make sure we can bring kids on campus for academic reasons."

OSAA established a schedule for winter sports to run Dec. 28 to March 7, fall sports from Feb. 22 to May 2 and Spring sports Feb. 19 to June 17.

Learning needs

"We're on a pathway to get our kids working out, which is good news," Polkinghorn said.

HRCSD is prioritizing a return from CDL to in-person instruction for K-3 students so they can build literacy and numeracy skills critical to their future success in school, according to Polkinghorn.

Students that read and do math at grade-level by the end of third grade are more likely to experience success throughout their school years. Having the county's youngest students on-site will enable HRCSD staff to assess and respond directly and immediately to the varying learning needs of its students.

HRCSD plans to return K-3 students to their neighborhood schools for in-person

instruction starting on Monday, Nov. 9, provided that Hood River County continues to meet the metrics for K-3 on-site learning. In-person instruction will occur Monday through Friday with a shortened daily schedule, approximately 7:45 a.m. to 12:15 p.m. HRCSD will continue to monitor weekly metrics and keep families informed of school reopening plans. Families with K-3 students will receive an email with more information.

Blueprints prepared

Hood River County does not meet ODE and OHA health metrics to reopen schools for in-person instruction for students in grades 4-12. Students in grades 4-12 will remain in CDL until at least Feb. 2.

In order to reopen schools within HRCSD, the school district must develop and submit Operational Blueprints to the school district's board of directors, ODE, and Hood River County Health Department for review and approval. The Operational Blueprints include the health and safety precautions that schools within HRCSD must follow to safely reopen.

The district administration meets regularly to discuss logistical issues and make recommendations for the Operational Blueprints. The Operational Blueprints were scheduled be presented to the HRCSD board of directors in the public work session on Oct. 28. Following that work session, the blueprints will be sent to ODE and Hood River County Health Department for review and approval.

HRCSD appreciates families' time and effort dedicated toward supporting their student(s) during online learning, Polkinghorn said in the press release.

The school district invites

families to complete the Online Learning Feedback Survey to share their experiences with online learning, either through CDL or Hood River Options Academy (HROA).

HRCSD staff and teachers look forward to seeing students on campuses as soon as it is safe. In the meantime, HRCSD encourages community members to continue to wear a face mask, maintain a physical distance, stay home if sick, and wash hands frequently.

HR county Christmas Project registration begins

Pandemic brings changes: Online enrollment and delivery system in December

Registrations for the 2020 Hood River County Christmas Project will start Sunday, Nov. 1 and continue through Dec. 7.

The program provides assistance with food and children's gifts for families in need during the Christmas holiday and benefits Hood River County families that currently meet State of Oregon low income eligibility standards.

Family size is based on the adults/children currently living in the home.

Christmas Project registration does not interfere with SNAP or FISH benefits.

Last year, approximately 470 local families (1,787 total individuals, including 868 children) received Christmas Project benefits.

"This year will be a lot different for The Christmas Project than previous years due to the current state of the COVID-19 pandemic," said coordinator Bruce Holmson. "Based on the current and predicted future status of the virus and for the safety of our families in need and our volunteers, the Christmas Project will be mitigating potential virus risks this fall with a completely different approach on how we register our families in need and how we provide and distribute needed food security." This year, all 2020 family registrations will be done

remotely by phone or online (Bilingual Registration Page) at the website — hoodriver-countychristmasproject.com.

Registration volunteers from the Christmas Project will also phone all of last year's participating families and re-register them for 2020 if they so desire.

All families will be able to choose a food gift card from four local grocery stores and a toy gift card for each child (0-18 years old) from two local stores and an online toy company.

Instead of coming into the Hood River County Fairgrounds to pick-up their food box, toy bag, and a food gift card, this year the 2020 registered families will be mailed their food gift card and toy gift card(s).

Individual and/or families experiencing homelessness are encouraged to register. The Christmas Project will be coordinating with Hood River Shelter Services and FISH this year to register and receive their gift cards.

Support the project

To contribute to the Hood River County Christmas Project:

- Checks — Mail to PO Box 872, Hood River, OR 97031
- Credit Cards — Visit the website donation page at www.hoodrivercountychristmasproject.com
- All donations are tax-deductible (501c3) organization.
- To help by volunteering, visit hoodrivercountychristmasproject.com

CORRECTION

Alison McDonald served for 16 years as a bilingual counselor at Hood River Middle School. Her education role, and spelling of her last name, were incorrect in the column on "Baja South" published in the Oct. 21 edition.

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