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Weather
Partly sunny through the week. Wed. to see highest high of the week at 78. Chance of showers Sat./Sun.

Columbia Gorge News

HOOD RIVER | THE DALLES | WHITE SALMON

Wednesday, April 21, 2021 Volume 2, Issue 3

\$1.00

Removing barriers to mental health

■ **Jacob Bertram**
Columbia Gorge News

WHITE SALMON — Starting this week, the health and wellness center building on the White Salmon Valley School District campus is opening to provide services at a permanent location.

The program, born out of an initial \$75,000 grant through Southwest Washington Accountable Community of Health (SWACH) and a partnership with NorthShore Medical Group and White Salmon Valley Educational Foundation, and later supplemented through additional funding by SWACH and community donations, will now have a permanent residency on the school district campus.

When the program first started a year ago, NorthShore therapists had been providing one-on-one services on the NorthShore campus with students given transportation thanks to the K-Link group, which funded rides through Mt. Adams Transportation.

The health and wellness center building was funded through a 2019 voter-approved \$7 million bond by the school district. Construction was completed earlier this month.



Health and wellness coordinator Michelle Ward said she hopes to see the new health and wellness center building be "a place where students feel comfortable and there's no stigma around it."

The building offers an exam room and lab for future sports therapy services, as well as room for two therapists to provide services, which will be on a twice-weekly

basis starting this Tuesday. Program leaders also want to eventually provide dental services in the building.

"We wouldn't have this health

and wellness center without our community," said Henkle Middle School Principal Haley Ortega. "It

See **CENTER**, page 8

COVID-19

Wasco County seeing COVID-19 increase

Single outbreak sparks 1/3 of new cases; vaccination best defense

A third surge of COVID-19 cases has begun in Wasco County, and the county will likely move up at least one, and likely two, risk categories in the coming week, according to a press release April 16 from North Central Public Health Department (NCPHD).

According to the release, from April 4 to mid-day April 16, Wasco County had 43 cases. The county reported 22 cases in all of March.

Wasco County has been at the lower risk category since Feb. 26. New risk levels will be announced Monday, to take effect next Friday.

See **COVID**, page 8

Hood River approves housing, traffic plans

■ **Gail Oberst**
For Columbia Gorge News

HOOD RIVER — The Hood River City Council April 12 approved middle-income housing rules and a west side addition to the transportation plan — separate measures that end months of meetings and public testimony. The zoning amendments and the traffic plans are not unrelated. Both reflect Hood River's growing popularity as a place to visit and to live, and the council's expressed aim to keep the small town livable for its residents.

In the four-hour virtual meeting — actually four consecutive meetings — the council also approved utility increases that target commercial and industrial users and approved conceptual plans for a mixed-income housing project on seven wooded acres in town along Rand Road.

The housing rule amendments, due for final approval April 26, have not been without detractors

during its months of discussion. The process needs more consideration, according to Councilor Erick Haynie and retired attorney Susan Crowley. Haynie has been the lone "nay" vote on the council's changes to the middle-income building code drafts. In March, he had asked that regular reports on how the new codes were working should be a part of the code amendment. The council agreed instead that reports could be made without an addition to the amendment.

"The process has been very disappointing to watch," said Crowley April 12, indicating she had originally liked the concept of friendly streetscapes filled with cottages on lots that allowed for gardens, trees and flowers. She bemoaned changes to the concept that had "closely-packed" buildings, reduced front porches, and she urged longer consideration: "The essence of a small town is lost," she said.

Councilors are amending building and zoning rules in hopes of



Among the first improvements in the city's west side plan will be to busy Rand Road, pictured above at the Cascade intersection.

Gail Oberst photo

developing projects that benefit middle income residents in a town where the average price for homes now exceeds \$500,000. The final reading of the middle-income housing amendment is set for April

26. Once approved, the codes will go into effect after 30 days. Changes allow for more dense construction in some residential

See **TRAFFIC**, page 8

GORGE LOCAL — EDUCATOR SPOTLIGHT

Learning how to 'make things work'

■ **Walker Sacon**
Columbia Gorge News

Hood River Options Academy (HROA) counselor Tammy Hosaka said staff have learned this year "not to make plans" as the program's participation grew from around 200 middle-and-high-schoolers to closer to 900 K-12 students from across the district.

The strength of the staff and program is adaptability, Hosaka said. "We don't say no. We're all about problem solving," she said. "Ok, you're here — now how are we going to make things work?"

The program has added staff this year, including Middle School Counselor Sierra Preston, who Hosaka said "was the five-hour energy drink we needed in December." Preston said the alternative approaches offered through HROA work well for a wide variety of students.

Students with ADHD, for instance, are better able to focus on a screen with time for "wiggle breaks" built into their day, Preston said. Homeless students, those with full-time jobs, athletes and others can benefit from the program, she said.

Preston said staff at HROA are "addicted to solutions."

"Some kids struggle in brick-and-mortar because they're future Olympians," Preston said. "People tend to think of dropouts, but that's not always the case."

Sean FitzSimons of the U.S. Ski and Snowboard Team and Boise State University volleyball's Shae Duffy are alumni of the program. HRVHS senior Harrison Howell, a University of Portland baseball signee, is finishing his high school career in the program this spring.

HROA also administers the district's Early College program — national merit scholar Jacob Kaplan is enrolled full-time and over 50 HRVHS students are obtaining college credits this year, Principal Kelly Running said.

"Every kid here needed help — socially, or with space to learn," Running said. The program's building on Eugene Street in Hood River has laundry machines for homeless students and a shower, as well as exercise equipment in Scott Walker's classroom. This year, a rabbit named Dandy often lounges in an enclosure in Sarah Lyon's room.

Last Friday, kindergarten Kenzie Mathews scratched the rabbit's head as Running talked to her about an assignment.



High school students work in Sarah Lyon's classroom at Hood River Options Academy on April 15.

Walker Sacon photo

"Sometimes this is the only way she'll focus on an iPad screen," Running said.

Running said the program's approach is made possible by a staff that's "all-in" on student success, without exception. Hosaka said she "begged to join" HROA in its second year after seeing it outgrow the counseling office at HRVHS where she worked and the program started.

"Everyone who has come to our program has been willing to put in

the work because we're focused on student success," Hosaka said. Running said Hosaka often works evenings and weekends.

The program is expected to again be offered to K-12 next year and staff are expecting 300-400 students, but Hosaka said staff will take things as they come and remain fluid.

The past year has been difficult for everyone, Running said. She

See **EDUCATOR**, page 3

WILDFIRE RISK



Oregon Department of Forestry crews respond to a recent fire in The Dalles area sparked by an abandoned campfire. Contributed photo

Fire danger high

Landowners urged not to burn; campers to use caution

■ **By Mark Gibson**
Columbia Gorge News

Forest managers throughout the Gorge are warning of unseasonably dry forest conditions which have resulted in a number early wildfires, primarily from debris pile burning and campfires.

Oregon Department of Forestry's (ODF) Central Oregon District is seeing a significant increase in escaped debris and

See **WILDFIRE**, page 8

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