



Contributed graphic

Helping Hands to open new community childcare center

In response to a growing critical need for childcare, Helping Hands Against Violence (HHAV) will open Millie's Place Child Care Center in September in downtown Hood River. Millie's Place will deliver care for children ages 3-5 as well as families using the services of Helping Hands. Millie's Place will strengthen family skills and provide an opportunity for all children to be nurtured, grow, and learn, according to a press release.

In addition, this summer — thanks to a grant from the Early Childhood Family Support Fund of Oregon Community Foundation — HHAV introduces Millie's Mobile Play and Learn Sessions, a free, outdoor, family-based preschool to include story times, music, crafts and learning

activities. Millie's Place early educators will provide creative, interactive experiences for young children (0-5) and their parents, said a press release. Aside from creating opportunities to engage young children in early learning experiences, Millie's Mobile Play and Learn Sessions will bring their program to neighborhood parks. In addition, the schedule of programming will include a variety of morning and evening hours to ensure working parents have the opportunity to attend with their children. Activities are scheduled to begin mid-July and continue through August.

For Millie's Place schedule of summer sessions and/or an application for Millie's Place Child Care Center, email director@milliesplace.org.

CGOA presents Aaron Meyer with the Gorge Sinfonietta

For its first live performance since the pandemic shut down in-person events, the Gorge Sinfonietta is teaming up with rock violinist Aaron Meyer and his five piece band for a free concert in Hood River's Jackson Park. The concert begins at 7 p.m. on Saturday, July 17.

"We're all incredibly excited to return to live performing," said CGOA Artistic Director and Conductor Mark Steighner. "We've spent the past 18 months creating dozens of virtual performances, but nothing can replace being on stage and in person."

This will mark the third time Aaron Meyer has joined with the orchestra, playing spectacular, high-energy arrangements of classical themes, rock standards and film music. From Led Zeppelin's Kashmir to Queen's Bohemian Rhapsody, from the theme from Lawrence of Arabia to brand new versions of

Vivaldi's The Four Seasons and Rossini's Barber of Seville, the hour long, family-friendly show will have music to appeal to a wide range of audience members.

"Aaron and his band are entertaining and incredibly talented musicians," Steighner said.

CGOA is presenting the concert for free in part as a "welcome back" to Gorge residents and also as a tribute to "home-town heroes." Steighner said, "Whether they are healthcare workers, first responders, teachers, service persons or retail staff that have kept us supplied during the pandemic, our community has no shortage of true heroes and this concert is our gift to them."

The concert will take place on the newly renovated stage in Jackson Park. "Thanks to the Hood River Lions, there is now a large, lighted covering over the stage that looks awesome and will no doubt help musical acoustics as well," Steighner said.

More information can be found online at gorgeorchestra.org or the CGOA Facebook page, www.facebook.com/gorgeorchestra.



Graphic courtesy of CGOA

Agencies to hold roundtable focused on Affordable Housing issues Virtual meeting set for Wednesday July 14

BINGEN — A virtual discussion focused on building awareness of what affordable housing is and sharing strategies to address this growing challenge throughout the Gorge will be held from noon to 1:30 p.m. on Wednesday, July 14. The bi-state event will be hosted by Washington Gorge Action Programs (WAGAP), Mid-Columbia Community Action Council (MCCAC) and Mid-Columbia Housing Authority (MCHA).

"Housing is a challenge for all income levels across the region," said Leslie Naramore, WAGAP's executive director. "Those in low-income households have even greater difficulty in finding access to affordable housing. We want to open a discussion with policymakers to share ideas on what potential solutions exist to create more affordable housing opportunities."

Participants will learn more about what affordable housing is, who it impacts in the area, and why advocating for effective policies and strategies matter. The discussion will focus on those that earn 80 percent or less of the Average Median Income (AMI).

An overview of affordable housing will be provided by Adria Buchanan, executive director of the Fair Housing Center for Washington.

The impact of the lack of affordable housing on low-income residents of underrepresented communities will be shared by two guests. Representing Comunidades, Ubaldo Hernández, senior organizer with Columbia Riverkeeper, will discuss impacts on Latino families, and Debra Whitefoot, executive director with Nch'i Wana Housing, will discuss impacts on Native families and share her years of experience

with housing projects.

Other panelists will include local elected officials who are currently active in efforts to improve access to housing in their jurisdictions. The City of White Salmon is currently engaged with its council and planning commission in developing a new comprehensive plan which includes proposed increases in density levels to account for anticipated future housing needs. Mayor Marla Keethler will be on hand to share updates. During her time in office as a council member, Megan Saunders of the City of Hood River has worked to improve housing accessibility and availability, including future development planning. She will share her perspectives.

The roundtable will be held using the Zoom virtual platform. To participate, email info@wagap.org to request the meeting link.



Meleah Bauman

Hood River County Ed Foundation names new executive director

HOOD RIVER — Meleah Bauman has been selected as the new executive director for the Hood River County Education Foundation (HRCEF). She starts on July 1, succeeding Laurie Stephens, who has been the foundation's executive director for the past five years.

Bauman has lived in Hood River for seven years and worked as a volunteer at Westside and Hood River Middle School, as well as United Way of the Gorge. She was named 2020 Volunteer of the Year at Hood River Middle School. She coached Special Olympics Basketball, and was a team parent for Hood River Youth Lacrosse.

Prior to moving to Hood River, Bauman served as a U.S. Air Force officer, retiring as a Lieutenant Colonel and managing many major projects during her 20-year military career. She was also a program manager for Insitu for four years.

Moving to the non-profit world, with management skills she has gained in government and private industry positions, was a career goal for Bauman.

"Serving students and teachers is the community that I am most passionate about," she said.

Board President Jan Veldhuisen Virk said, "We are so pleased to have Meleah joining HRCEF. Her diverse experience and her passion for increasing educational opportunities will serve the Foundation well. At the same time, we are thanking Laurie Stephens for the tremendous job she did in directing the Foundation with dedication and outstanding leadership."

Stephens leaves HRCEF in much better shape than she found it. During her tenure at HRCEF, she encouraged the HRCEF Board of Directors to develop the Reach for Excellence Gala as a major fundraising event for the Foundation. She remodeled the scholarship program, expanding it to offer more scholarships to Hood River Valley High School students, and improving communications with scholarship donors. She led the foundation to support the development of an electronic portal to receive and process students' scholarship applications. The

Opportunity Fund was created during her directorship, to provide middle school sports fees for students whose families could not afford that cost.

The Hood River County Education Foundation (HRCEF) is a non-profit 501c3 organization, with a mission to support the students and educators of the Hood River County School District. Governed by a board of directors and staffed primarily by volunteers, HRCEF has been providing college scholarships and grants to educators to enrich classroom learning for 30 years. A more recent focus has been to seek ways to help low-income families and students to access the opportunities the school district provides.

Contact HRCEF at www.hrcef.org or 541-387-5713, for information on programs and ways to donate.

Oregon's wipes labeling bill becomes law

Oregon becomes second state to require 'Do Not Flush' labeling

By League of Oregon Cities, the Special Districts Association of Oregon, and the Oregon Association of Clean Water Agencies

Oregon Gov. Kate Brown signed HB 2344 into law on June 8, making Oregon the nation's second state to require "Do Not Flush" labeling on disposable wipes. The state of Washington enacted a similar requirement in 2020.

The Oregon law requires manufacturers of baby wipes, make-up wipes, cleaning wipes

and other personal care wipes to adhere to a statewide labeling standard that requires product packaging to clearly indicate that such products should not be flushed down toilets.

The bill was a legislative priority for the League of Oregon Cities (LOC) and the Oregon Association of Clean Water Agencies (ACWA). The two groups coordinated with the Special Districts Association of Oregon to request introduction of HB 2344 in response to ongoing challenges and rising costs associated with wipes and related products that are frequently flushed down toilets. Wet wipes cause blockages resulting

in sewer backups, overflows and costly damage to pumps and wastewater treatment equipment in small towns, sanitary districts and large cities throughout Oregon.

"The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated an already growing problem caused by a glut of products marketed as flushable, when in fact they were clogging and damaging residential and community pipes," said ACWA Executive Director Susie Smith. "We are grateful to the cities, agencies and legislators who championed this common-sense requirement."

Wipes legislation is currently pending in California, Illinois, Maine, Massachusetts and Minnesota. The federal Break Free

From Plastic Pollution Act, which was re-introduced in March 2021, also contains a provision requiring "Do Not Flush" labeling for wipes.

In a 2020 report, the National Association of Clean Water Agencies estimated that wipes result in \$440 million per year in additional operational costs for wastewater utilities. Despite local investments in public education and outreach, numerous Oregon cities and wastewater districts have struggled with clogs in wastewater infrastructure that result from improper disposal of these products.

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