



THE REDMOND Spokesman

A special good morning to subscriber Gary Ollershaw

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REDMOND PROFICIENCY ACADEMY

Program offers child care for school employees

BY ZACK DEMARS
The Bulletin

Editor's Note: This story is part of a series of stories exploring solutions to the daycare crises in Central Oregon. The City Club of Central Oregon will host a forum Thursday seeking solutions. See cityclubco.org. For more coverage, see bendbullet.com

When COVID-19 hit, some teachers at the Redmond Proficiency Academy found themselves taking care of dozens of kids, all from their homes.

Not only did they teach their classes remotely, but some also had their own children to take care of at home as daycares closed under pandemic restrictions.

More Information: Employer-supported child care

Aside from the raw benefit of increasing the availability of child care in the area, RPA leaders say having daycare available onsite is a benefit the school use to attract potential employees, especially during a challenging labor market.

Some at NeighborImpact, which assists the region's child care providers in their operations, have pointed to RPA's model as a good example of employer-supported child care, where employers use child care options as a benefit to attract and retain employees.

A number of other models of employer-supported child care are in place across the country, like micro-centers running in the spare rooms of office buildings and child care subsidy payments to employees, according to an employer toolkit NeighborImpact released this year, available online at bendbulletin.us/3rlrpKM.

Such was the case for Laurel Eberhart, an RPA high school teacher. "My own child care closed, and so I

had a 9-month-old at home, and I was teaching from home with a 9-month-old, which is not ideal," Eberhart said.

"A couple other teachers were all in the same boat, and we were like, 'what can we do, if anything?'"

School staff had previously batted around the idea of opening an on-site daycare to expand the high school's early childhood education career and technical education track. At first, the idea seemed impossible once the pandemic began — but once they invited staff to drop their children in an unused classroom for daycare, they saw that it could work, and that staff would be on board.

The result was the school's Learn & Play program, which offers child care for both employees and community members just across the street from

the school.

It's been a big boost for the academy and its staff. Eberhart, for example, says she couldn't find care anywhere else.

"It's nonexistent anywhere else. If I didn't have Learn & Play for my own two kids this year, I would be the parent who quit my job," Eberhart said. "I would not be working this year if I didn't have it."

Hillary Kirk, who now oversees Learn & Play, says Eberhart isn't alone.

"What I heard from some staff members was just this relief," Kirk said.

See **Academy** / P5

Community supported agriculture

An added connection between the farmer, the land and the consumer



Benji Nagel waters trays of seedlings in his greenhouse in Sisters on Sunday.

Ryan Brennecke/The Bulletin photos

BY SUZANNE ROIG • The Bulletin

When Amy Gregory paid for a community supported agriculture membership with Redmond Fibonacci Farms, little did she know the weekly box of fresh vegetables would change her life.

A year later, the former Seattle resident is a vegetarian, eating mainly locally grown vegetables. Her membership gives the farm an infusion of cash before the crop comes up.

It's like a timeshare for vegetables.

Participants each spring sign up for a CSA, as they're called, and when the summer harvest begins, they are entitled to a weekly or biweekly box of produce of what ever is harvested at that time.

See **CSAs** / P5



With her infant daughter in tow, Carys Wilkins and her son Junius Nagel work on planting lettuce seeds in their greenhouse in Sisters on Sunday.

Spokesman Calendar

Events in and around Redmond

The Redmond Spokesman welcomes event information for its community calendar. Submissions are limited to nonprofit, free and live entertainment events. Deadline is 5 p.m. Thursday for the following Wednesday's paper. Items are published on a space-available basis and may be edited. Contact us at news@redmondspokesman.com or fax 541-548-3203.

WEDNESDAY 2/16

Housing and Community Development Committee Meeting: A regular meeting will be held; 4-5:30 p.m.; free; Redmond City Hall, Online; redmondoregon.gov or 541-923-7710.

Open Hub Singing Club: An evening of singing...together. Group singing is one of the most ancient technologies of being; 6-7:30 p.m.; free; Redmond Library, 827 SW Deschutes Ave., Redmond; deschuteslibrary.org or 541-312-1029.

THURSDAY 2/17

Alicia Viani Band — Range Music Series: The lyrical duo will

perform; 5:30-8:30 p.m.; free; Brasada Ranch, 16986 SW Brasada Ranch Road, Powell Butte; brasada.com or 855-318-4960.

The Ballybogs: The Irish traditional music band will perform; 6-8 p.m.; free; Porter Brewing Co., 611 NE Jackpine Ct. 2, Redmond; porterbrewingco.com or 541-504-7959.

FRIDAY 2/18

Redmond Coffee Clatter — Just Cut Organic Juice Bar:

Join for a morning of networking and some fresh just cut organic juice and hear what else is new; 8:30-9:30 a.m.; free; Just Cut Organic Juice Bar, 412 SW Evergreen Ave., Redmond; See **Calendar** / P5

The Spokesman uses recycled newsprint

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Volume 112, No. 25
USPS 778-040

